National Restaurant Association Vol. 4 ☐ No. 2 ☐ February 1984

NRA NEWS

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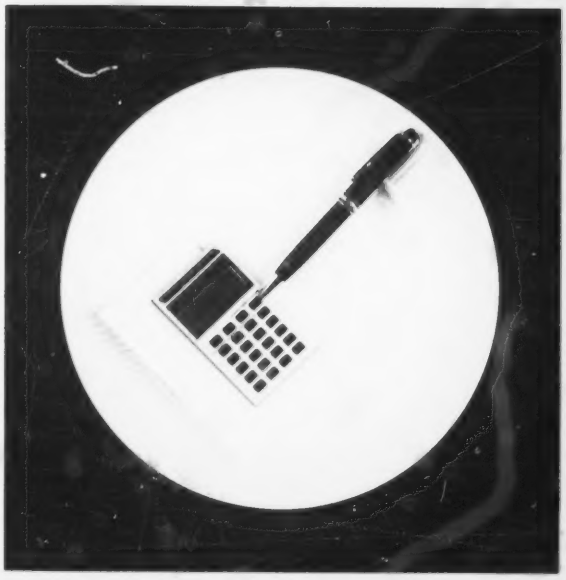
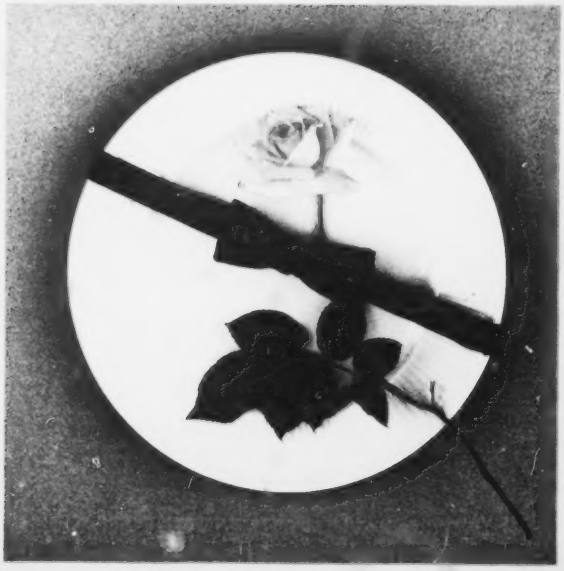
Image Shopping
Choosing an identity for your restaurant





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Vol. 4 No. 2 February 1984

NRA NEWS

NRA Board tackles drunk driving

At the February board meeting the NRA directors set in motion an industry-wide campaign to assist in the effort to reduce the problem of drunk driving.

Even though restaurants and taverns dispense only one-fourth of the alcohol consumed in the country, our industry recognizes the tragedy that can result from driving after excessive drinking.

The board has committed NRA's resources to increase public awareness and understanding of the problem. It authorized the immediate development of a workshop designed to teach servers how to deal with the situations that could lead to drunk driving. During early summer, this program will be offered through state restaurant associations in every region of the country.

The board also authorized the development of posters, table tents and other materials that will help foodservice operators communicate their concern about drunk driving to employees and guests. NRA will make these materials available within a few weeks to establishments that serve alcoholic beverages.

Having taken these immediate measures, the board then established a task force of industry leaders to plan and coordinate ongoing industry-wide activities aimed at assisting efforts to reduce the problem of drunk driving—a problem which reaches far beyond the restaurant and tavern industry.

This task force will review education programs, public awareness programs, industry practices and alternative forms of transportation. It will then make recommendations to the NRA membership on how it can best aid in the effort to reduce incidents of drunk driving.

The task force will also contact other organizations already involved in programs aimed at dealing with the problem. To a great extent, the NRA board has committed the association to joining in a national campaign. The task force will tell us where and how we can make the greatest contribution.

Sincerely,

Joe R. Lee
Chairman of the Board and
President

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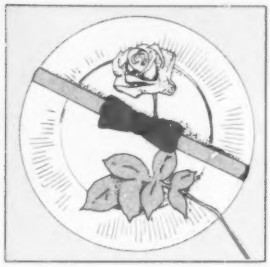

Your restaurant image is that intangible quality that makes your operation stand apart from your competition. Although the end result is greater than the sum of its parts, the image of a restaurant is not haphazard. It consists of hundreds of elements. Here is a look at some key ingredients.

5 An overview of 12 image factors.

6 A closer look at some ways you create your restaurant's image.

10 Spotlight on tablesettings and how they set the image stage.

12 How a public relations firm can help you communicate your image to your customers.

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SHORT ORDER

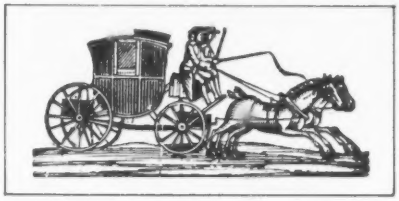
Travel outlook: good news for 1984

The 1984 Travel Outlook Forum held last December in Washington, DC, had good news for restaurants, hotels and motels: Travel will increase significantly in 1984 as Americans take to the road to satisfy pent-up wanderlust.

Two events that will add even more incentive to travel in 1984 are the Louisiana World Exposition in New Orleans, LA, May 12-Nov. 11, and the summer Olympics in Los Angeles, CA, July 28-Aug. 12. The Olympics should also increase international travel to the U.S.

The forum's keynote address speaker, Arthur White, vice chairman of Yankelovich, Skelly and White, New York, NY, said that Americans are still interested in the "full, rich satisfying life that was a goal in the 60s," but they have become more careful about saving and are spending their money wisely. They care about value and quality and will seek that in their travels.

Some of the notable trends predicted at the annual Travel Outlook Forum, which was sponsored by the U.S. Travel Data Center, included:



- Motel rates should increase six to seven percent, the occupancy rate should go up two to three percent, and total hotel revenues should increase nine to 12 percent.
- Restaurant prices will increase 5.3 percent in 1984, and eating and drinking places will see a nine percent increase in sales.
- Business travel will increase seven percent in 1984.

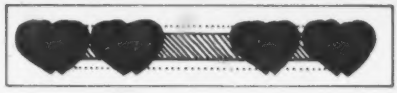
Forum proceedings, contained in the 200-page book *1984 Outlook for Travel and Tourism*, are available for $85 prepaid from the U.S. Travel Data Center, 1899 L St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

If you can't come to us, we'll come to you

If you've attended any of the numerous NRA educational seminars, which are presented throughout the country, you know how much there is to learn from instructors who know and understand your business. Why not share the experience with your managers, colleagues and employees right in your own operation?

The NRA education programs department now offers many of its most popular seminars on an "in-house" basis. Maybe you'd like your entire management staff to learn how to be more effective supervisors or to better manage their time. Because our instructors tailor their presentations to meet your special needs, this is a highly effective way to train your employees, and it shows a commitment from you to their development.

For more information on this program or any of the NRA seminars or conferences, contact NRA's education programs department, (202) 638-6100.



Culinary Heart Kitchen class set for March in New York

New York University and the New York Heart Association are co-sponsoring a cooking class called "Culinary Hearts Kitchen." The class, consisting of four Saturday morning sessions from March 3 to 31, will show participants how to cook healthy meals with flair.

Delia Hammock, nutritionist and food consultant, will demonstrate ways to reduce fat and increase the nutritional value of gourmet and classic meals without sacrificing flavor, color or texture. The fee is $80.00. Lectures, demonstrations and plenty of sampling are all part of the curriculum. For more information, contact Jenene Garey, assistant professor, Center for the Study of Foodservice Management, New York University, 537 East Building, New York, NY 10003.

NRA IN ACTION

Great Menu Contest entries due March 9

If you haven't entered your menu in NRA's Great Menu Contest, send in your form today. The deadline is March 9. Winning entries will appear in NRA's 1984 publication *Great Menus*. For more information, contact NRA's communications department.

Show registration

NRA Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show registration badges will be sent to NRA members on March 15. Look for yours in the mail, and plan to attend the NRA Show, May 19-23, at Chicago's McCormick Place. ***NRA NEWS*** pre-Show coverage will appear in the April issue.

NRA Board meets

The NRA Board of Directors was meeting in Orlando, FL, as this issue of ***NRA NEWS*** went to press. The March issue of ***NRA NEWS*** will highlight board action at the winter meeting which is expected to include the naming of a new executive vice president.

NRA focuses on holiday traffic

An NRA contracted research report analyzed restaurant customer traffic for the 15 top U.S. holidays. It comes as no surprise that Mother's Day is at the top of the chart. Christmas Day is at the bottom. For more information, see *Foodservice Trends* in this issue.

WASHINGTON REPORT

National concern grows over drunk driving

This year the restaurant industry may find itself in the crossfire of what has become an emotional national issue: drunk driving. The Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving, calling for legal and judicial changes to keep intoxicated drivers off the roads, congressional interest in establishing a drinking age of 21 and heightened public awareness that drinking and driving don't mix have all come together to kindle interest in this issue.

"The situation is critical," said NRA Senior Director Jeff Prince. "The public is alarmed, and people may press for ineffective solutions that will hurt the industry." Prince said that at its February meeting the NRA Board reviewed an extensive program that will allow the industry to respond in a constructive manner to the DWI problem."

Several bills that would crack down on drunk driving by raising the drinking age to 21 were introduced in Congress last year. None of these proposals has advanced, although a bill by Rep. James Florio (D-NJ) to raise the drinking age has had hearings and was reported from a House energy and commerce subcommittee the congressman chairs.

Interest in this legislation will undoubtedly be sustained through the year by high public interest in the drunk driving problem and the recent report of the Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving, which also calls for raising the drinking

age to 21. The Commission's final report was released in December and recommends a number of legal and judicial changes to prevent alcohol-related traffic fatalities.

These recommendations include changes in the drinking age, server liability and law enforcement. Among other things, the report recommends that all states enact dram shop legislation and that bars and restaurants display signs informing customers of the law relating to alcohol use and highway safety.

Nearly half the states (24) currently have some form of dram shop or third party liability statute. About 13 more states have common laws that cover third party liability. Only a dozen states have neither. Under these laws, sellers of alcoholic beverages may be held financially responsible if they provide alcoholic beverages to an obviously intoxicated person who injures a third party.

The commission believes that all states should adopt such laws.

Although the report makes a number of other recommendations, it recognizes that changed public opinion is critical for finding solutions to the problem. It emphasizes that until drunkenness becomes socially unacceptable "most legal and judicial changes will bring no more than short-term solutions to the drunk driving problem." The Commission says that a comprehensive awareness and prevention program, coupled with legislative and administrative changes, "must be sustained for at least a decade and must make use of every channel of communication. . . ."

Dole agrees to some changes but not in allocation

As a result of continuing talks between NRA and the staff of U.S. Sen. Robert Dole (R-KS), the Senate Finance Committee may consider changes to the new tip reporting law this year. In December, Finance Chairman Dole indicated that he was looking at some modifications to the new law. His staff subsequently met with NRA Government Relations Director Ron Sarasin to discuss possible changes.

Dole has since said that he would look favorably upon three changes to the new law:

1) allowing a restaurant to "prove down" the eight percent allocation threshold to as low as two percent (under the current law, the allocation threshold can be reduced to no lower than five percent)

2) permitting a majority of tipped employees in a restaurant to petition for an allocation reduction (under the law, only an employer may apply for a reduction) and

3) requiring IRS to identify more precisely the applicable recordkeeping requirements for tipped employees.

NRA continues to support H.R. 3803. . .

Although NRA is pleased the senator sees the need for these modifications, Sarasin said they do not go far enough in correcting inequities that exist in the law. He added that NRA will continue to push for enactment of H.R. 3803.

"At this point, Sen. Dole is not willing to correct what we feel is the greatest problem with the new law: allocation. Therefore, we plan to continue to push for congressional consideration of H.R.3803. We feel this legislation offers necessary relief to employers and employees while also insuring that tipped employees pay their fair share of taxes."

Sen. Dole said in a letter to NRA that he could not agree to changes that would affect the basic allocation requirement because "we are told that step will substantially affect the revenue gain from the provision."

H.R. 3803 and a companion measure in the Senate, S. 2070, would replace allocation with a requirement that employers provide IRS with individual reported tips, individual charge tips and individual hours worked if total reported tips fall below eight percent of sales.

"The House bill continues to pick up support," Sarasin said. "In addition to the two original sponsors, Reps. John Duncan (R-TN) and Andrew Jacobs (D-IN), 99 other congressmen have signed onto the bill. That indicates a tremendous interest.

—Jay Morris

THE BOARD ROOM

NRA Foodservice Education Roundable attracts 120 participants

The NRA Foodservice Education Roundtable, held December 5, 1983, at the Marriott in Anaheim, CA, during the American Vocational Association (AVA) Convention, attracted more than 120 educators and foodservice executives.

The roundtable was designed to foster better communication and cooperation between the educational community and the foodservice industry.

A panel discussion of industry leaders and educators centered on four critical areas—forecasting the industry's future labor needs, designing and implementing instructional programs, pinpointing potential program resources and developing ways to continue collaboration between educators and the foodservice industry.

NRA Treasurer Ted Balestreri delivered the opening address. Other NRA board members participating in the discussion included Ernest H. Royal, Royals Hearthside, Rutland, VT; Nancy Dini-Sullivan, Dini's Sea Grill, Boston, MA; Peter Lee, of Victoria Station and Biff Naylor, Naylor Brothers Restaurants, Los Angeles, CA.

Also on hand for the occasion were the department heads of hotel and restaurant institutional management programs at Penn State, St. Louis Community College and the Minutemen Vo-Tech in Massachusetts as well as members of the NRA/AVA Advisory Council, the California Restaurant Association, the Council of Hotel and Restaurant Trainers (CHART) and Human Resources Committee member Frank DeCius, DeCius Enterprises, Portland, OR.

NRA board members featured in American Express hospitality booklet

Nine NRA board members were profiled in American Express' recently published booklet "50 Service Ideas That Work." The result of countless personal and telephone interviews with restaurateurs across the country, the booklet aims to help restaurateurs improve customer satisfaction.

NRA board members offered their thoughts on some key areas:

- *The guest*—Michael Grisanti, Casa Grisanti, Louisville, KY. "We ask with every reservation, who is coming and why? Is this a special occasion that we can give attention to? What would they like us to do? And we always give them what they want . . .
- *Team work*—Ella Brennan, Commander's Palace, New Orleans, LA. "If the staff is thoroughly prepared and supported, they feel comfortable. They know they are all working together; no one is going to let them down. Then they can do their best. . . ."
- *Concentration*—Don Dianda, Doro's, San Francisco, CA. "The secret is in concentration. Every service person should concentrate on his guests, look at their body movements. When they reach for something, an experienced waiter will know what that something is; and if it's not there, provide it."
- *Friendliness*—Mike Hurst, 15th Street Fisheries, Fort Lauderdale, FL. "When a nice friendly person sincerely talks to a customer about something he knows, when he gives him the gift of teaching and caring, that customer is going to go away talking about that restaurant and create word-of-mouth business that you can't advertise or buy."
- *The Right Questions*—Jack Kozlak, Kozlak's Royal Oak, Shoreview, MN. "A good waiter, though he cannot intuitively know at what rate a party wants to be served, can certainly ask, 'Are you in for a leisurely lunch today or are you on a time schedule?'
- *Cordiality*—Bill Regas, Regas Restaurant, Knoxville, TN. "You have to deal with walk-ins graciously. After all, you don't want to make them feel like second-class citizens just because they didn't call. . . ."
- *Minorities, the disabled and older workers*—Ernie Royal, Royal's Hearthside, Rutland, VT. "They have been excellent, dedicated employees, who are here every day."
- *Walk-ins*—Ted Balestreri, Sardine Factory, Monterey, CA. "We welcome them, tell them how glad we are they chose to be with us and invite them to wait in our bar. We tell them how long the wait will be—at prime time always more than an hour. And we offer to call other restaurants nearby for them. . . . People appreciate that, the friendliness and warmth. They know when you're sincerely trying to service them—not just twisting their arm to sell them a drink."
- *Children*—John Dankos, Stanley Stegmeyer's Hodgepodge, Richmond, VA. "I think they're an important part of our business. Families are eating out more than ever, and we need to make sure we're taking care of the children. Already I have second generation customers—young adults who started coming here as toddlers . . . Don't look at kids as a lower check average. Look at them as part of a family, special guests and your guests of tomorrow."

Copies of "50 Service Ideas That Work" are available for $6.95. From *Briefing*, P.O. Box 889, Midtown Station, New York, NY 10018.

—Dorothy Dee

Creating an image 12 key factors

by Jeri Galloway,
Director of Advertising and Marketing,
Schelde Enterprises

Image in the restaurant business is a collective impression. It is everything that the public associates with your restaurant. It is your appeal. The difference between good and bad image is the difference between eager, constant business and casual, occasional sales.

Everything that you do to attract business has an effect on your image. Image is very simple and, at the same time, very complex. It involves hundreds of aspects of your business. I call these aspects image factors.

Image factor 1—the exterior

The first important image factor is the exterior of your restaurant. At Schelde, we're in the family restaurant business. We tell our managers that we want the exteriors of our restaurants to look like their homes.

We don't want papers lying around outside. We don't want cigarette butts in the driveway. We don't want dumpsters sitting at the side of the building where customers can see them. We want it clean and neat.

Image factor 2—the interior decor

We want people who come in to feel comfortable. We want the place to be clean. We want chairs in our restaurant that are big enough to accommodate not just the average customer, but most customers. Cleanliness is extremely important—perhaps the most important thing in a family restaurant. Cleanliness helps convey a feeling of comfort.

Image factor 3—the feeling of the interior

We want the restaurant to exude a sense of personal warmth. We want people to feel welcome, to feel as though they are an important part of the environment, to feel as though we want them there and recognize them.

Image factor 4—employee uniforms

Uniforms are important. For a family restaurant I would recommend a uniform for hostesses, a uniform for waitresses, a uniform for cooks and a uniform for busboys. They can be casual, but they should all be the same.

Uniforms make customers aware that you care about your employees' appearance. Customers will infer that, if you care about employees, you probably care about your customers. Customers make a lot of inferences from what you do.

Image factor 5—employee attitude

This is a very important factor. Employees should be competent, and they should be considerate.

Image factor 6—food quality and variety

Food quality is more important than variety.

Image factor 7—portion size

Our philosophy on portion size is to give customers a little more than what they pay for. In the long run this encourages customer loyalty.

Image factor 8—food presentation

Food presentation is also important. If you want to make your restaurant appealing to people, the food has to be appealing.

In one of our restaurants we have a special item in the category of food presentation. It's ugly, a mixture of Mexican and Polish foods—a burrito, kielbasa, cherry tomatoes in the shape of a face—but we have fun with the presentation. Our menu describes the item as being so ugly that the waitresses refuse to serve it. Instead, the cook himself serves it. We keep a special hat in the kitchen and, after the cook has prepared the item, he puts on the hat and brings the dish out.

Image factor 9—efficient service

Good service, style and speed in serving also have a positive effect on your presentation.

Image factor 10—community involvement

Community involvement affects your image outside the restaurant. In a family restaurant, for example, you have to consider community involvement issues, such as whether you want to encourage high school students to come to your restaurant. If you do, then their families have a different image of the restaurant. You might consider having your managers, for example, talk to high school business classes. You could run ads in high school yearbooks. There are many ways to get involved in the community, that will affect your image in a very positive way.

Image factor 11—advertising

Your advertising style is very important to your image. Are you the kind of person who gets an idea, jots it down on paper and then calls up the newspaper to whip something together and put it in the paper? If you do that, the style of the ad can affect your image negatively. We never do that. We always give the newspaper camera-ready art for our advertisements. We hire a freelance artist to draw up the ad so there are no mistakes in it. I check it and make sure that it's right, and then we give it to the newspaper. That way, we can ensure that what goes in the paper is exactly what we want. We're very careful to guarantee that all of our advertising represents image that we want to portray.

Image factor 12—promotions

The type of promotions that you do also affects your image. If you constantly offer discounts, for example, your customers won't understand why you don't just lower your prices. There are types of promotions that can affect your image in a positive way and that will not give you a reputation as a discounter.

Does the public like your image?. . .

There are hundreds of other things that affect your image—price structure, the age of your employees, the selling techniques that they use, the ease of access into your restaurant, whether you have take out or not.

Once you are confident that your image is exactly what you want, then I would recommend that you do some research to make sure the public likes your image as much as you do. ❑

Your restaurant's image:

more than a sum of its parts

by Kathy Boyle

In the 1950's there were good hamburgers. But good hamburgers were not enough. Hamburgers needed identity and an image that would stick in the customer's mind. To attract the attention of passing motorists, the owner of a drive-in hamburger stand in California built large yellow horseshoe-shaped structures on the side of his building. The rest is history.

From the sign on the facade to the paint on the walls, each detail of a restaurant fits together to create an image. At its best the image—if it is harmonious and consistent—attracts customers and builds a following for your restaurant.

When planning Absolutely Glorious, a nouvelle cuisine restaurant on Route 70 in Cherry Hill, NJ, architect Edwin Bronstein was faced with perhaps the most difficult problem of all. The restaurant he was to plan was preceded by two failures on the same site. The location was along a commercial strip with a large parking lot in front that created an unattractive view for customers.

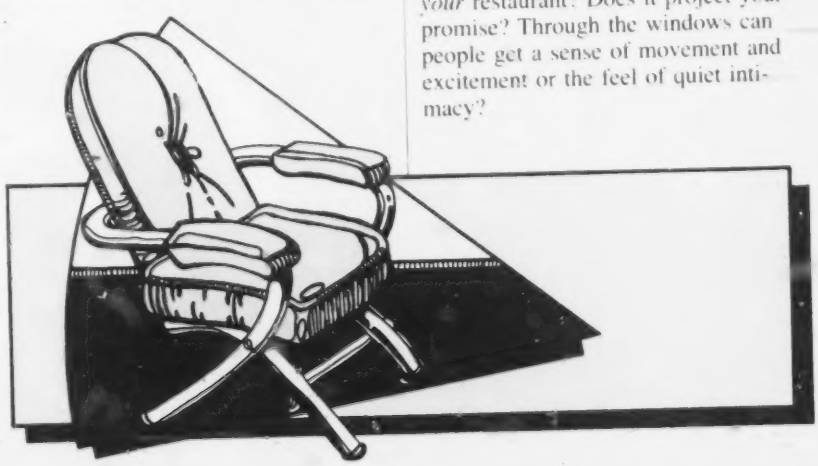
To counter the unattractive view and at the same time create a dramatic new image, an 85-foot surrealistic mural of clouds was painted on the back, outside wall of the restaurant. The whole focus of the building was changed. The soft blue skyline of clouds is visible from the road and very eye catching to both customers and passers-by. Passers-by often do a double-take. This accomplishes what was wanted—recognition of a new and different image.

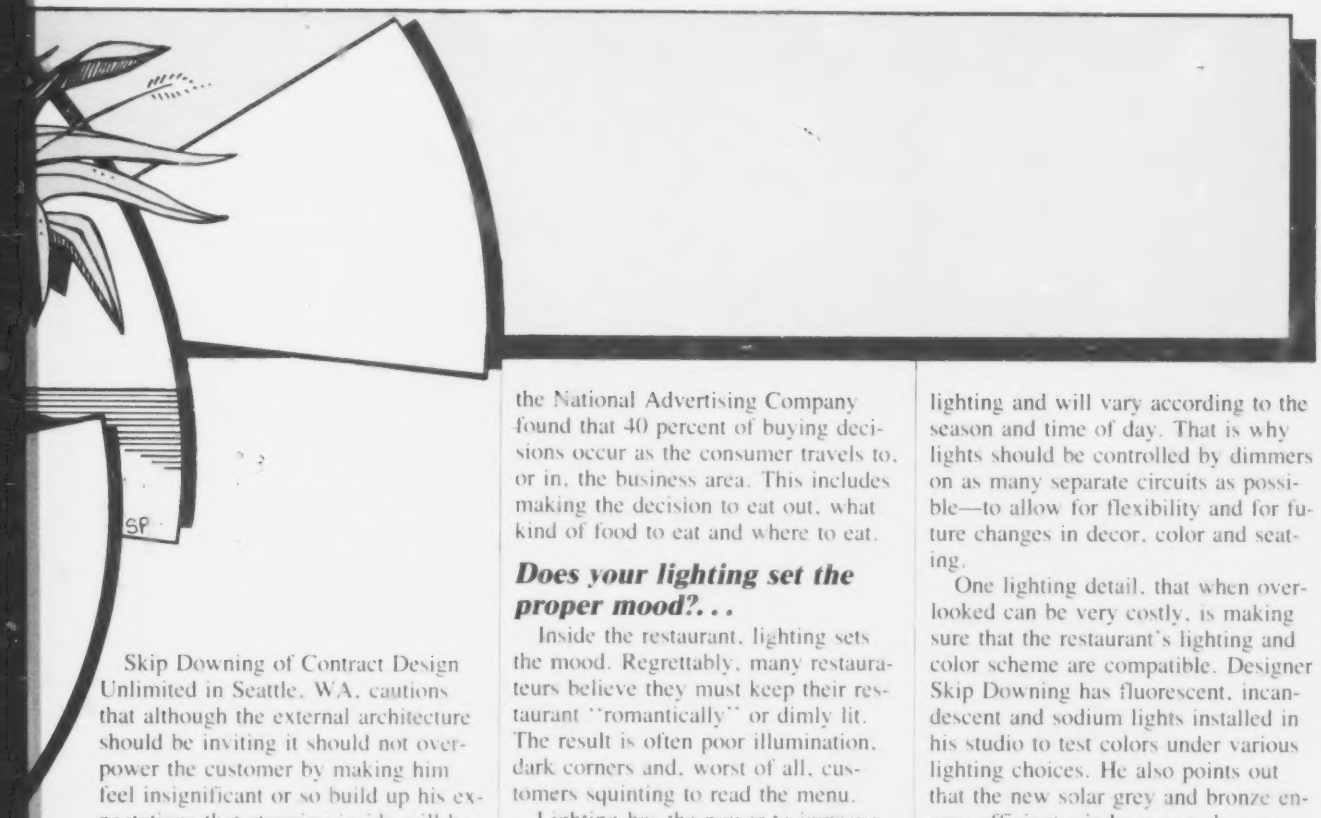
To begin the creative process, Bronstein asked the new owners to bring in "pictures of things they liked to look at, not just other restaurants." Being familiar with the owners, their skill with food, and their other successful restaurants, Bronstein worked to create a place that was specifically theirs. From the logo, colors and materials to the napkins and china Bronstein and the owners worked together to fit all the pieces into a unified whole.

Like Absolutely Glorious, your restaurant must be a cohesive and unique whole. How do you create that special aura? Here is a review of some key elements.

Does the exterior project your promise?. . .

Start with the exterior. Is it immediately recognizable as a restaurant? More specifically, is it recognizable as *your* restaurant? Does it project your promise? Through the windows can people get a sense of movement and excitement or the feel of quiet intimacy?





Skip Downing of Contract Design Unlimited in Seattle, WA, cautions that although the external architecture should be inviting it should not overpower the customer by making him feel insignificant or so build up his expectations that stepping inside will be a comedown.

Does your image pull them off the street?. . .

It's been said that a good logo catches a weary traveller's eye and persuades someone flipping though the newspaper to go to a particular restaurant. A good logo can convey identity, personality and even the type of cuisine.

Creating a good logo is an art. Most restaurants rely on a signature or lettered logo, but a good illustrated logo, like the NBC peacock or the RCA dog, can reinforce your image on a daily basis. A logo should take into consideration the type of restaurant, the type of customer you want to reach and the image, inside and out, you want to project. Logos can translate to menus, napkins, glassware, uniforms, salt and pepper shakers, matches and ashtrays. A truly good logo can give an exterior sign a distinctive look, providing the owner with the cheapest and most cost-effective advertising a restaurant can buy.

Most restaurateurs realize they need an exterior sign, but few understand the contribution it can make to their business. Research done in 1980 by the National Advertising Company found that 40 percent of buying decisions occur as the consumer travels to, or in, the business area. This includes making the decision to eat out, what kind of food to eat and where to eat.

Does your lighting set the proper mood?. . .

Inside the restaurant, lighting sets the mood. Regrettably, many restaurateurs believe they must keep their restaurant "romantically" or dimly lit. The result is often poor illumination, dark corners and, worst of all, customers squinting to read the menu.

Lighting has the power to improve the appearance of the food, soften facial features, control people's moods and determine the length of time patrons spend in a restaurant. A little planning can make a lighting system complement the image you are trying to convey. Some experts favor low lighting with tables highlighted to create a clean, contemporary look. Others suggest the best lighting surrounds customers with light rather than spotlights them.

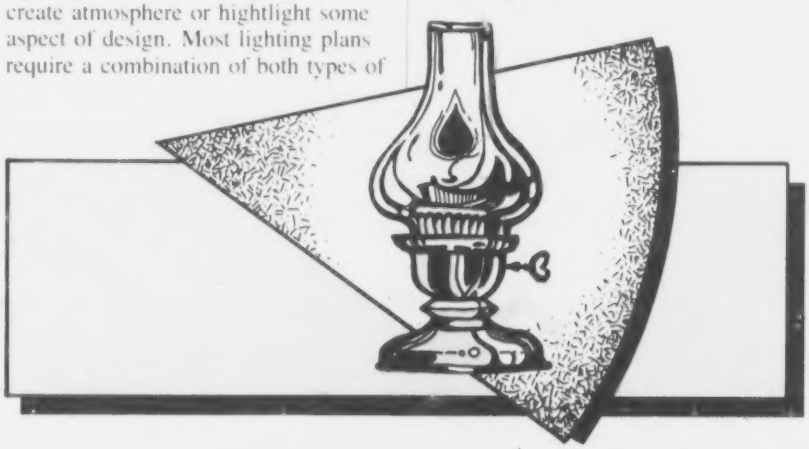
Restaurant lighting falls into two basic categories: (1) functional—lighting to see by and (2) decorative—lighting used in an aesthetic way to create atmosphere or hightlight some aspect of design. Most lighting plans require a combination of both types of lighting and will vary according to the season and time of day. That is why lights should be controlled by dimmers on as many separate circuits as possible—to allow for flexibility and for future changes in decor, color and seating.

One lighting detail, that when overlooked can be very costly, is making sure that the restaurant's lighting and color scheme are compatible. Designer Skip Downing has fluorescent, incandescent and sodium lights installed in his studio to test colors under various lighting choices. He also points out that the new solar grey and bronze energy efficient windows can change mood and lighting requirements and can affect the color scheme.

Regardless of your lighting choice, make sure you consider the cost of maintenance, replacement bulbs and cleaning. All the money in the world invested in creating the perfect atmosphere with lighting might as well be thrown away without proper care and cleaning. Exquisite crystal chandeliers, for example, look cheap unless they are kept sparkling clean.

Do your floors and ceiling enhance your decor?. . .

Ceilings and floors can define



space, set noise levels and enhance your design scheme.

The choice for floors generally comes down to carpet, tile or wood. Each has its own advantage, depending on the overall design. Carpet can insulate a room or act as an accoustical buffer. With planning, it can set off special areas, guide traffic and unite an interior design. By using patterned carpet effectively, for example, a large room can be made to seem more intimate. Some colors and patterns can also mask heavy use areas. Although color can make a specific design statement, there are many practical considerations. Brightly colored carpet, for example, should be located away from direct sunlight as it will bleach noticeably. Also consider the feel of the carpet underfoot. Plusher carpet is less durable but may be appropriate for an intimate lounge where you want customers to linger.

Ceramic tile, one of the oldest building materials available, has recently made a comeback. Extremely durable, it can be used in any part of the restaurant. Criticized in the past for its poor accoustical qualities, it can be combined with other materials or used in combination with carpet to soften its sound. Tile also has the ability to act as a passive solar device by retaining heat for extended periods of time.

Wood is another fast growing flooring choice for restaurants. It can create an image of warmth and lustre. In specifying a wood floor, it is important to choose the right cut and grade. Wood cut directly through the tree trunk, known as end grain, is considered to be the most durable. Also, lower grade woods with irregular grain, knots and worm holes can produce a rustic image and at the same time hide burns and scratches. On the other hand, higher grade wood, free of imperfections, projects a more formal look.

Just as floors are planned to accommodate a restaurant's specific needs, both aesthetically and functionally, a ceiling can enlarge space, enclose space, determine traffic patterns or simply make a strong design statement.

The familiar suspended ceiling can conceal plumbing, air conditioning, sound and lighting systems, yet allows easy access to them if necessary. The most common suspended ceiling of accoustical tile has the advantage of muffling sound, but it tends to lack mood and drama. Other possibilities for suspended ceilings include reflective tiles, tin, wood textures, simulated stained glass, luminous surfaces or fabric.

The alternative to a suspended ceiling is the exposed ceiling. Exposed duct work, for example, can create a strong visual statement, but be careful to make it a part of the overall design plan.

Do you have the right tables, chairs, knives and forks?. . .

Furniture and tableware are part of the restaurant's personality as well. The comfort of the chair, its slant, and where the back hits the customer can all influence table turnover. Skip Downing firmly adheres to the practice of "not buying a chair until we have an actual sample to sit in. A different fabric, alone, can change the feel of a chair by the way it stretches over the seat." This "feel" can add up to dollars and cents if customers linger too long or not long enough—depending on your marketing plan.

Size and spacing of tables and chairs is also important to the restaurant's overall concept and image. For example, you don't want customers to have to squeeze themselves behind a table or to stuff themselves into a chair. This makes them feel overweight, uncomfortable and self-conscious.

Some experts believe the tabletop, the two square feet in front of the customer's eyes, makes the most important statement about the restaurant during the meal. To determine if the tabletops are working for you, you might try watching the table through an entire dining experience. Then ask, are the tabletops designed for your customers and integrated into the total design package? Are the glassware and china a jumble of styles, or are they working well together? Have you coordinated the amount of food you serve to the plate size? A band of color around the edge of the plate can make a large plate look smaller. Is the china and tabletop conducive to the type of food you serve? Some china has too much color, or it doesn't look right

"Your menu is the single item every customer sees. It is where all the parts of your restaurant come together: the food, the merchandising and the image."

with certain types of food. In the planning process, keep in mind that the plate frames and enhances the food.

Glassware, especially the cocktail glass, wine glass or water glass, often creates the customer's first impression of the meal. Choosing proper glassware conveys the image, theme, decor and personality you want. A balloon wine glass, for example, conveys a generous, inviting image, one that will invite customers to return. The right glass for the right beverage can be as important as mixing the drinks—it can influence perceived value, drink costs and profits.

In a formal restaurant, after investing substantial capital in fine china and glassware, flowers can round out the total effect. A common misconception, however, is that flowers are only for formal restaurants. Floral decor can usually be designed to fit almost any budget. When Mary Fristoe and her partners started the Desert Rose Cafe in Las Cruces, NM, with $500 in their pockets, they used homemade tables and chairs and a lot of beautiful plants. The simplicity fit the theme of the vegetarian menu.

The menu: Where all the parts come together. . .

Your menu is the single item every customer sees. It is where all the parts of your restaurant come together; the food, the merchandising and the image. The menu is your direct communication link with your customer. It is also your salesperson.

Many consultants, designers, printers, advertising agencies and art services specialize in producing menus. But they can't create that special touch without your help. Lack of direction on the menu can be as harmful as lack of direction in the kitchen. Menu designers, for example, won't know you have the best wine cellar in the city, that you grow your own herbs or that you've just paid $5,000 for a gelato ice cream making machine unless you tell them.

Keep track of your ideas. Before you begin an actual menu design collect photographs of menu offerings, recipes, history of entrees and any other material that might be of inspirational value for the artist or writer who will be working on your menu.

Scrutinize your competition, your customers and the capabilities of your kitchen. Test ideas and recipes on your family, friends and employees and eliminate any dish they don't like. Then evaluate costs and determine what really is the best price for each item. Jot down all your thoughts and get ready for the final stages of developing your menu. But remember: Whatever the menu promises, it had better deliver. Customers are rarely forgiving.

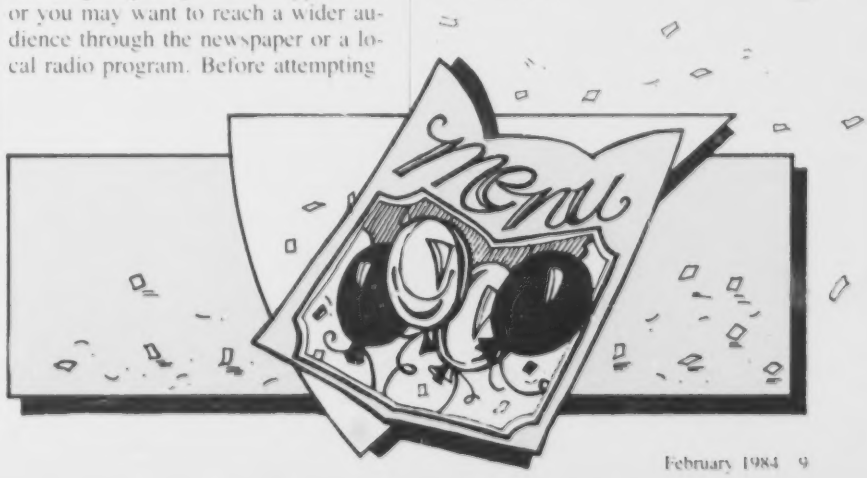
Are you telling the world?. . .

Working all the parts together into a unified whole is worthless if no one knows about your restaurant. Depending on your image, word-of-mouth advertising may be your best approach, or you may want to reach a wider audience through the newspaper or a local radio program. Before attempting to choose the right medium for your image, answer some questions. What is your advertising goal? Are you trying to encourage new business or remind customers to come back or both? Who are your customers? Do they listen to rock or classical radio? Do they read newspapers? Are they vacationers who might pass by the outdoor billboard down the road or look for restaurant ideas before they leave home?

A recent Cornell University advertising study suggests that ads work best when they concentrate on "positioning" or matching your niche with your ad copy and design. Cornell found that consumers absorb a total image from an ad.

Finally, be clear on how much you can spend on advertising and promotions. A rule-of-thumb for most businesses is between three and five percent of sales.

The image you choose to project should be thought through—not a piecemeal approach. An image will work only if it is consistent throughout every part of the operation and coincides with your special "promise" to the customer. ❑



Tablesettings set the stage

by Carol Caprione

When a restaurateur sets up his linen, china, flatware, glasses and centerpiece, he's doing more than just setting his tables. He is setting the mood, the pace and the price expectation for his customers' dining experience.

Your tablesetting is your image, and it is your game plan. Whether consciously or subliminally, it affects your customers expectations and their entire dining experience. A tablesetting cues customers on what type of service to expect and subtly hints at what may be included with the dinner. A bread plate and butter causes a customer to look around for the bread. A salad plate implies salad is included with the meal. A wine glass suggests that the restaurant may be very proud of its wine list.

You should plan a table set up like a director sets the stage. Every item on the table is a prop and should lead a customers to the right conclusions about the meal they are expecting. Is your centerpiece a flower, a pot of fresh herbs or a candle? Are the ashtrays disposable or made of glass? Are napkins cloth or paper?

You should be able to sit at one of your tables and quickly give a reason why everything is there and why it's there in that color and style. You should even be able to explain why certain standard items are not there.

A consistent image is crucial. . .

Most design experts agree that the tabletop must be consistent with the total image of the restaurant. Lola Lehrman, president of Design Unlimited/Culinary Concepts, Hempstead, NY, warns that a restaurateur can easily intimidate a prospective customer who is looking for a casual, fairly inexpensive meal by using a tabletop setting that is too formal for his operation.

A restaurateur should resist the temptation to use an item if it doesn't complement the rest of his tabletop—no matter what the sentimental reason may be. For example, if a grandmother lovingly crocheted the edges of 300 linen napkins for a restaurateur's new restaurant, these napkins should not be used if they clash with the rest of the tabletop decor.

Balancing the beautiful with the practical. . .

According to Dick Shellenberger, vice president of advertising and merchandising at Syracuse China, Syracuse, NY: "There is a general upscaling of expectations among restaurant diners. People are much more critical today than they were five years ago. Quality is very highly regarded."

NRA member Walter Pfeffer, coowner of the Brass Key in Atlanta, GA, agrees, "I constantly notice people looking at the silverware, noticing the glassware, touching the linen, watching how the napkins are folded. They notice these things because they realize they are paying for them. I would say the tablesetting is worth about 60 percent of the overall image," Pfeffer maintains.

Aesthetics are important, but they are by no means the only consideration when choosing tablesetting equipment. Since tabletop products have to be used many times everyday, durability must be a major consideration. In addition, the federal government requires that all equipment and utensils, including plasticware, must be resistant to denting, buckeling, pitting, chipping and crazing.

Today there is an endless variety of china and other tabletop items available that meets both durability and aesthetic requirements. There also are almost limitless variations possible in displaying these items.

Here are some suggestions from design experts to help sort through the choices.

China: There is a general trend toward lighter, more delicate looks, but some restaurateurs are opting for bright bold colors which frame the food. The pattern of the china can make a vast difference. According to Steve Unger, director of the Design Center at Syracuse China, Syracuse, NY, "It's amazing how the look of relatively heavy, serviceable, durable china can be transformed by a delicate pattern. It's an optical illusion, but it's very effective."

For cleaning and aesthetic purposes Unger recommends glazed china over a mat finish. Mat china wears well; but because of its surface composition, it doesn't rinse soil away easily. Glazed china, on the other hand, fares much better in the dishwasher and looks nice much longer.

Glassware: Glasses are highly susceptible to breakage. Therefore, they should be easy to handle, easy to store and have a sturdy base. If your restaurant serves wine, be sure to have the wine glass on the tabletop before the guest sits down. It can work as a merchandising tool.

Flatware: Flatware has been referred to as the frame of the tablesetting. It should round out rather than dominate the appearance of the china and glassware.

Many restaurateurs have switched from silverplated flatware to a high grade of stainless steel, which is easier to maintain since it doesn't require polishing. Because flatware is a high loss item—it tends to land in the trash or in customer's pockets—restaurateurs have found stainless steel more cost effective.

Table coverings: Table coverings have come a long way since the white linen cloths of yesteryear. Today's tablecloths come in a variety of colors, patterns and materials. Stain resistance and color retention are crucial qualities to look for in tablecloths and napkins.

Some operators simply use placemats, which offer a wide diversity in material and design to protect their tables. Other restaurateurs use no coverings at all, especially those with attractive wood grains or decorative materials like marble.

Napkins: Another tradition in tabletop settings that has fallen by the wayside is that of automatically placing

the napkin on the left. Restaurateurs have discovered that creative folds can enhance their tabletop. Some are creating the illusion of more space on the table by placing the napkin in the center of the plate or in the wine glass.

Centerpiece: Restaurateurs are paying much more attention to their table's centerpiece, since it has come to represent quality and a sense of caring. Many restaurateurs are using fresh flowers or live plants for their centerpieces.

Maintainence is mandatory. . .

No matter how much time, effort and expense is put into a tablesetting, all will be lost if the customer sits down to a bent fork, a spotted glass or a chipped plate. Restaurateurs should regularly check their tabletop items to weed out damaged pieces.

How one NRA member created a signature tabletop. . .

Walter Pfeffer, co-owner of the Brass Key Restaurant, Atlanta, GA, ($30 check average) gave his seven-year-old restaurant a face lift two and one-half years ago. His new tablesetting has won awards.

The colors of the Brass Key Restaurant are gray, maroon and violet, and the tablesetting complements the motif with its white tablecloth and maroon napkin. The tablesetting does not include a dinner plate when guests first sit down. Instead, a napkin is set in a fan fashion in the place where the dinner plate usually rests. When there is a special party, the fan-shapped napkins are put into wine glasses.

The Brass Key Restaurant uses no china. Pfeffer prefers glass plates for salads, soups and main courses. "I use glass because it is uniquely different and people like it," says Pfeffer. "Don't ask me why. Perhaps it's because they get china everywhere else. Also, this glass, known as duraflex, is less costly than china since it breaks and chips less often."

What to do before purchasing tabletop items

- *Develop a master plan*. Do not order any tabletop item until you draw up a master plan that takes into account every food item on the menu. This plan will tell you what you will need and what you will be doing with it.
- *Do research*: Take full advantage of the materials and advice offered by distributors. A great deal of descriptive literature is available free of charge to restaurateurs. Study these materials carefully. Also read the trade magazines and attend the trade shows.
- *Get samples*. Just as you would try a suit on to see if it fits properly, try out the tabletop items. Before ordering large quantities of china, glassware, flatware and so forth, get samples from the company and see how it looks on your tables and in different light levels.
- *Use reputable industry suppliers*. Choose china that adheres to federal and state health codes. One distributor tells of a restaurateur who had beautiful pottery made for his restaurant. The restaurateur asked the distributor how long he thought the pottery would endure. The distributor answered, "until the first health inspector sees it." No matter how beautiful or costly the china is, if it doesn't meet the health requirements, it can't be used.
- *Get the maximum effective use out of every item you order*: In a very fine dining establishment, a selection of different sized serviceware may be necessary. But in many more moderately priced restaurants, a single plate or glass can have multiple uses. For example, the same size plate can be used for salads, bread and butter, appetizers and desserts. One basic glass can be used for as much as 85 percent of the drinks and can also hold some appetizers and desserts.

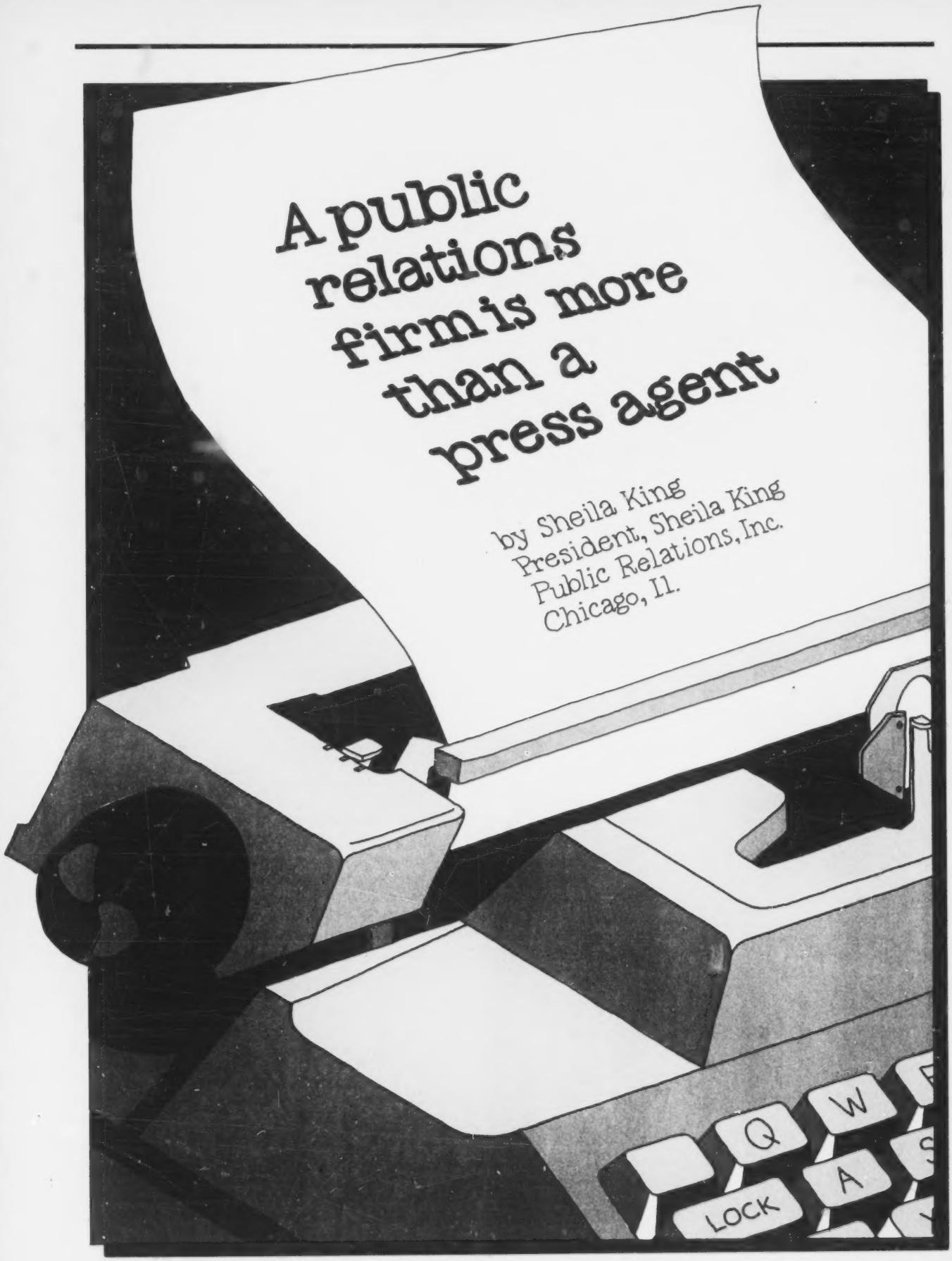
—Lola Lehrman
President, Design Unlimited/Culinary Concepts

The flatware is a high grade of stainless steel with a shell on the handle. This was chosen with economy in mind since many pieces are lost in the trash and some become souvenirs for customers. Water glasses include fresh limes. Although Pfeffer believes in being different, he chose salt and pepper shakers in the common Eiffel shape. "I figure if these are seen everywhere, patrons will be less likely to want one as a souvenir," he maintains.

In keeping with the decor of the restaurant, the centerpiece is a china bud vase that holds live roses, carnations and irises. "My theme flower is the iris which appears in tiffany windows, over the door frames, in paintings and woven into the material of the banquettes. Before I remodeled, I used silk flowers. But you can never replace the quality of fresh flowers. Nothing is more elegant," Pfeffer explains.

A public relations firm is more than a press agent

by Sheila King
President, Sheila King
Public Relations, Inc.
Chicago, Il.



Public relations firms are easy to find. There are a number of independent public relations people who operate by themselves or with one assistant. There are a number of mid-sized agencies, such as mine, and there are a number of national agencies that have outlets and offices in many cities.

The most successful matchups occur between restaurants and PR firms that are similar in size and in philosophy. At our firm, we see ourselves as being in long-term partnership with our clients. We've worked for some restaurateurs for as long as 10 years, which is something of a world's record in the restaurant industry.

Many people look to a PR firm for publicity, media coverage and help in developing promotions, gimmicks and direct mail programs. But the primary things that you should look to a PR agency for are advice, guidance and counseling on how your public perceives you.

The job of an outside agency is to try to help you spread out into the community and to determine exactly how you can increase your business. Sales volume can most easily be increased by increase in traffic.

What do we do to stay in that kind of creative relationship? What do restaurateurs look to us for? That's what I'm going to outline here to help you develop guidelines for yourself.

In-house staff develop particulars. . .

Some of our clients have in-house PR departments or in-house people who are responsible for the particulars of public relations programs that we develop. The in-house person's job becomes one of coordination, making sure that all of the goals that are established are being attended to, checking budgets and making sure that the employees at that operation are aware of the promotion. One of the most terrifying thoughts for a public relations person is to create a fabulous promotion with no employee on the premises knowing what it is about when the customers start coming through the doors.

So, the in-house person functions generally as the eyes and ears of the owner-operator, keeps him informed about what is going on, keeps the employees informed and does that miraculous juggling act of trying to figure out how to satisfy all the different needs and desires of all the different managers within the organization.

The job of a public relations firm is to bring an outsider's point of view. A lot of times, the best news a PR firm can bring to clients is what has gone wrong in their restaurant. It is their job to keep their ears open and to give the owner-operator a full picture of what is going on.

Last June, for example, we started working with a new restaurant called Cynthia's in Chicago. In my experience it is the first restaurant that has opened on time and within budget. We started with a very successful media party. We invited 125 producers from radio and television stations; on-air personalities and food, restaurant and entertainment writers and editors. We asked them to the restaurant for a special dinner. Everyone was impressed. The problem came when the restaurant started getting a Saturday night crowd on Tuesday night. Success almost killed them.

The primary things you should look to a PR agency for are advice, guidance and counseling on how your public perceives you.

I met with both owners, and we spent two and a half hours talking about setting up management meetings, advising them to meet with their employees on a weekly basis to talk about implementing general plans. We also talked with them about employee training and how to handle reservation problems. At this point, they can fill the restaurant every night with reservations alone. They need a plan for dealing with their walk-in business. They have an outside dining cafe that seats 45 people, but it's of no use during the winter months.

These are all topics not commonly thought of as public relations matters. Of course, we are also doing the standard media coverage activities, getting notices in the paper and getting people in the media to talk and write about what is going on at Cynthia's. But at this point our primary function is more one of management counsel, assisting the owners in opening and operating the kind of restaurant they set out to build. It is a long process, and one that benefits from an outsider's point of view.

The last time we met, Cynthia's owners mentioned that, after the first week or so, they weren't receiving as many compliments on the food, service staff and decor. It may have something to do with the fact that people who have reservations have had to wait an hour and a half for a table. Recently I walked in with a reporter, and a service person who didn't know that I was associated with the restaurant quickly told us that the chef would be confused if there were any requests for changes or substitutions and that the kitchen was a mess. The service person was simply overloaded and unable to cope with what was going on.

These things are communicated to customers and can damage their initial impression of the restaurant. In this case, the owners have implemented a number of programs to set things right again. I'm pleased to report that it is a manageable situation.

What to look for in a PR firm. . .

There are a lot of specific skills to look for in public relations professionals. We've never found all of these skills in a single person, and that's why we think an agency approach to public relations is most effective.

Skills you should look for in a public relations professional are the ability to do research, abilfty to conduct surveys informally or formally and ability to determine what is happening or what is not happening in your restaurant among your employees and among your customers.

If you are looking to increase out-of-town business, for example, you might want to find out if all the cab drivers in your city know where your restaurant is located. PR personnel should be able to conduct a survey to determine such facts.

Your PR consultant has the luxury of being one step removed from the day-to-day confusion in a restaurant. We are not under the same pressures

that the restaurant operator is under to respond to situations. We don't feel the same kind of immediate pressure to solve problems quickly.

The most important skill to look for in PR personnel is ability to communicate clearly and effectively what it is they are trying to do. You also should look for somebody who has integrity, somebody who is persuasive but not pushy and somebody who is sensitive to what the marketplace is looking for.

These are things that are difficult to measure. Other traits even more difficult to measure in initial interviews are a sense of responsibility, sympathy and commitment; in other words, how far will the agency go to make something work for you.

That's why I suggested that if you are a mid-size restaurant operation, you're probably better off looking for a mid-size public relations agency. If you're a single unit operator, you might be more comfortable looking for a freelance public relations professional or somebody who has a small agency of maybe three or four people so that they can understand the same day-to-day pressures that you as a restaurateur are experiencing.

Public relations is not advertising. . .

A lot of people who are very sophisticated about running their own businesses do not understand the difference between public relations and advertising. The biggest difference between them is that in advertising you have almost total control of the message and its placement and in public relations you survive by your wits.

In a newspaper, the things that are in boxes with pictures and illustrations are the ads. They probably pay the salary of almost everybody who writes all of the other material that surrounds it—the news and the feature stories. The job of PR is to get the free media coverage so we can have the best promotion in the world. It's not always as easy as it sounds. An article on a particular restaurant can be scheduled for weeks in advance, but the story can be dropped in a second because of more pressing news—a hostage situation or a fire.

It's important that a PR person make it clear to you in advance that there are no guarantees when it comes to media coverage. If a PR professional tells you he or she can guarantee you coverage in a newspaper column or the food pages or can get a good review for your restaurant, you should walk away. Either they are not telling you the truth or they are doing things that you do not want to be associated with.

In addition to the management function that I've mentioned, we are involved in direct response programs. The "Lettuce Entertain You" (Chicago, IL) program is an example.

We had a budget for a direct mail program aimed at 200,000 people. We worked with American Express to observe some of the successful and not so successful features of direct response programs in Chicago. One of the things that we decided was essential to the success of our program was that it had to continue to communicate the "Lettuce Entertain You" theme of fun, good taste and value.

> The key is to find a professional who most closely reflects your values and philosophy of service and to find somebody who has a good reputation.

Lettuce Entertain You is the firm which had a "redeem this billboard" program on their tenth anniversary. People did indeed take billboards off the sides of buses and down from eight-foot billboards to redeem them for a free meal.

We decided we needed something that communicated fun but at the same time communicated value. We also had to have something that had a quick turnaround redemption rate—30 days. So we sent a sealed envelope to a mailing list we got from American Express. Inside was a gift certificate for from $5 to $25 off the meal good in any Lettuce Entertain You operation. The key was that customers couldn't open the envelope until they came to the restaurant and finished their meal. They had to open it in front of the waitress.

The cover letter asked, "Why are we keeping you in suspense?" and answered, "because whenever we do something we want it to be as exciting as our food."

The promotion also kidded people about the possibility of cheating. In the sealed envelope was a second piece of paper for the person who opened the envelope at home despite the two or three warnings not to. It said, in effect, "You're really not our kind of person, anyway. Stay home. We don't like cheaters."

This part of the promotion generated media coverage and phone calls from people who explained that their children had opened their mail. American Express got phone calls in Phoenix from people who said, "I don't want them to know that I opened the envelope. Can you send me another one?"

What could have been an ordinary direct mail coupon program turned into something fun.

Get involved in community relations programs. . .

I also think it is very important for restaurateurs to work within their own community. A great majority of customers are within three miles of the restaurant. A restaurateur ought to look to community leaders to find ways to help a community. You can do this in a non-self-serving way. A PR agency can intercede for you and make the initial approaches. A PR agency can help you orchestrate a special event or a fund-raising program on behalf of a community program.

You should look to a PR agency to help you establish and define both your short-term and your long-term goals. A PR person has to be in on what your goals are. If your goal is to increase lunch business during the fall, you need to communicate that goal.

You should look to your PR person to counsel you on actions or policies you take that could affect public relations. If, for example, you are operating in a college town and you decide that you are going to close for the time that students go on vacation, you have very clearly communicated to your customers who are not college students that they are not that important.

It may not occur to you, as an insider, what kind of effect your business decisions can have on community relations. PR people can provide a valuable outside perspective.

PR people should support your marketing program. . .

You should look to PR people to support your marketing program and your direct mail promotions with news releases, with feature articles, with interviews and with radio and television coverage.

You have to be realistic about who you are and what you can do, and you have to be willing to cooperate with the media. You also have to be willing to set aside some of your immediate problems in order to take advantage of an opportunity that may arise in three or four months.

PR people ought to be able to assist you with employee communications. They can help with ideas for payroll stuffers; employee contests or programs and educational programs, such as wine tastings or learning about the nutritional values of foods that are on the menu.

They ought to be able to hook you up with appropriate community groups that will in the long-term help you increase business at your restaurant and enhance your image in the community. Most important, they should help you analyze the effectiveness of the PR program. That full circle in public relations is essential.

This means that you have to share results with the PR person. It's nice to be at the other end of the phone when a client calls us up and says, "We got a 30 percent response rate on this promotion." We start talking about what to do next.

PR people should get privileged information about your business, about your operating expenses. In turn, PR people should tell you up front all of the expenses that they are incurring on your behalf. PR people should meet with you before they present a specific public relations program to learn what you want to accomplish and to determine if you have a budget in mind.

How to begin a relationship with a PR person. . .

By the time you include expenses for all collateral materials, printing, postage and photography, your PR budget may be as high as two or three percent of your gross sales. But a lot of times it is not that costly. It is important to have a business plan and a general understanding of what you want to accomplish before you talk to a PR agency. The initial meeting with a potential PR representative should establish in your mind whether or not you can work together. If you feel confident that the person understands what you are trying to accomplish with your operation and if you feel confident that this person is somebody you can trust and somebody who can respond to your ideas, the PR person should come back to you with a written proposal that summarizes the objectives of your public relations program. They ought to coincide with the goals of your business.

The next thing a PR person ought to identify for you is which people, which markets, they plan to target. If you are looking to attract a young crowd, or a lunch crowd or a five-to-seven dinner crowd Monday through Thursday, the PR person should identify and describe those groups of people. This offers you a second chance to measure whether or not the PR person understands your concerns and your business.

> If a PR professional tells you he or she can guarantee you coverage in a newspaper column or the food pages or can get a good review for your restaurant, you should walk away.

The written proposal should also present a list of activities the PR person will undertake and how they will go about it. The proposal should specify how they will go about getting you coverage in the newspapers, how they will go about getting you on nightly news shows, how they will develop cooking demonstrations or how they will develop employee programs or generate a newsletter for you. These things should be spelled out not to the extent that you see everything the PR person or agency is going to do during the next 12 months but rather to give you a sense that they clearly understand their responsibilities with respect to your objectives.

The next thing you should see are one or two examples of detailed action plans. In our office, we work from "to do" lists. The more details that are anticipated, the more problems you can foresee and solve before the promotion is implemented, and the more likely you are to be successful.

We maintain a list for each client and update it twice a month. Items on the list come from client meetings, from staff planning meetings and from opportunities that arise spontaneously.

We give clients a list of items we are undertaking that month and advise them who is responsible for it and when it is due. Every good "to do" list involves the client as well because it is a partnership. The restaurateur has to communicate to his staff that it is their responsibility to respond to certain requests from the PR agency.

Five different ways to bill for PR services. . .

Budget, the most important part of the PR program, is always the most difficult to discuss. There are generally five different ways that PR people bill for their services. The first, and probably the most common, is fixed monthly retainers. I don't like this way of billing, but a lot of reputable PR agencies bill on a monthly retainer. The theory is that in a long-term relationship with a client the budget evens out. Some months you might do a great deal of work and some months you might do less work.

The second way to bill is on a fixed, but small, monthly retainer plus additional billing for staff time. In our business our inventory is our time. That's all we've got. So we have to figure out how to run a profitable business based on how much time people spend working on your account.

The standard rule of thumb in service businesses is that you bill out two and a half times to three times the salary of the person who is working on an account. So if an employee is being paid $20,000 a year to work on an account, the revenue from that account must be $50,000. The excess covers time that is not billable, such as reading newspapers, meeting with people for general information and general office duties.

The third method of billing involves a retainer plus special project additions. You pay a fixed amount of money each month for general services

and then pay an additional sum of money for a one-time specialized service. If the PR firm knows how to open a restaurant for lunch, for example, and you have only been serving dinner, you may want to ask them to help you expand your business. They will charge you a lump sum for this service and tell you how much time it will take before you can open at lunch.

The fourth method is straight hours. Many PR firms are now billing strictly on an hourly basis. It is not an open-ended agreement. You agree on a maximum amount of money for services that you will not exceed without approval from the client. This way you get exactly what you pay for.

PR business is seasonal, as are lots of other businesses. Generally, what happens is when your business is the busiest and you are bringing in the most money, you need a PR person the least; and when your business is off, you need a PR person the most. So restaurants need to develop a long-term plan and a long-term relationship with a PR agency so they can use them to plan for times when business is down.

Finally, PR firms may bill simply on a special project basis. This is a nice way to get acquainted with a PR firm to determine whether you can work with them. For example, you can say, "What would you do now that I am opening for Sunday brunch for the first time in the 20 years I've been in business? How would you take that as a project and translate it into a public relations program for me?"

All out-of-pocket expenses for PR people are over and above the service fees. Out-of-pocket expenses include things such as printing, postage and photography. Any entertainment they do on your behalf will be at your restaurant, and you ought to expect to pay for that kind of entertaining.

However, you ought not to expect to pay for a meal every time your PR person walks in the door. You pay that person, and they pay you. You keep the relationship on a professional basis. Just as you wouldn't expect your attorney or your accountant to provide services in return for food and beverages, don't expect PR people to make those kinds of trades. Keep the relationship on a cash basis.

Some PR people mark up out-of-pocket expenses and others do not. One way is no more acceptable than another. It's a matter of how people operate their businesses. If, for example, a PR person handles the billing for a $15,000 printing job, that means that his money for that printing is tied up for about 60 days. What the PR professional might prefer to do—other than mark-up costs—is to ask suppliers to bill his clients directly.

If, on the other hand, a PR person has a series of small instant print jobs that total $60 over the course of the month, he might not mark up these changes, considering them an accommodation or a service to the client. You should ask the PR person in advance what you are paying for.

Expect to pay one month's fee as a deposit. . .

You should expect to pay the PR agency the equivalent of one month's service fee in advance as a deposit. This shows your good faith, and it gives the PR person a budget to work with to get you started on your program.

You'll find that during the first two or three months the PR firm may put in a lot of extra time and effort but not bill you for it because they want to get to know you. A PR firm should be willing to devote time to establishing a long-term relationship with a client. And it's critical that you not say to a PR person, "You've got four weeks to turn this situation around." It simply won't work. It's realistic to agree on an initial three or six-month testing time to determine whether there is a good match.

There are several ways to check on PR people before you make your final selection. The Public Relations Society of America is a professional organization based in New York with chapters in most local cities. People who have been in the PR business for more than five years and who pass a series of written and oral exams can be accredited by the Public Relations Society of America. There also are local publicity clubs.

You should ask a PR person or firm to supply you with a list of clients. Call them to find out what they think of the person or firm. You can check with media people in town about an agency's reputation. Ultimately, though, I think you should rely on your own instincts. This is somebody you are going to be talking to probably every day so it has to be somebody you feel comfortable with and somebody who can respond to you openly and honestly. When working with an agency, ask to meet the people who will be working on your account.

A contract written in plain English is helpful to understand what you are paying for and who is responsible for what. It's a formality, but it gives everyone a common reference point. I think that's important although ultimately you are working on a handshake and on a very important relationship in terms of establishing yourself in the community.

The minuses of working with an outside agency are that they will never know your business as well as you do. The pluses are that they have a broader perspective of what is going on in the industry and in your community. And you have access to a wider range of skills and talents because you are not relying on yourself or one other person to do everything. You're working with an agency that has a corps of people who have different talents. You have a fresh viewpoint. You have people who are not under the same day-to-day pressures that you are. You have access to other resources. Because a PR firm represents other kinds of clients, often clients among themselves will cooperate. A bank, for example, will cooperate with a restaurant in developing a promotion. A retail store will put on fashion shows in a restaurant. These cross promotions give you a lot more attention and exposure for less time and effort than it would take for you or one of your staff to develop a similar program.

The key is to find a professional who most closely reflects your values and philosophy of service and to find somebody who has a good reputation.

Editor's Note

This article has been excerpted from PROMOTIONS—What's Possible, What's Popular and What's Profitable, *the edited manuscript of NRA's Second Annual National Conference on Promotions. Copies of the book are available for $12.50 plus $2 shipping and handling. Payment must accompany all orders. Credit card telephone orders are accepted. Please specify number MG575 when placing your order with the National Restaurant Association, 311 First St., N.W., Washington, DC 20001 or call (800) 424-5156.*

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What to do before your operation goes union

by Robert W. Hartland, Esq.
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Getting involved with a labor union is much like marriage. It's a lot easier to get into the relationship than to get out of it.

How to prevent union activity. . .

When an employer is confronted with a serious union organizing drive, the most frequent lament is "Why me?" Typically, the cause for union activity in restaurants stems from ineffective management techniques that have created serious dissatisfaction among employees. Here is an overview of some common problems.

1. *Be fair and uniform*

Relatively few union campaigns are instigated by "tough" or "strong" management. Much more frequently, the source of the problem is a weak, ineffectual and disorganized manager who ignores problems at certain times and overreacts to problems at other times. Endemic to such a management style is a lack of uniformity or consistency in personnel matters and the consequent perception of unfairness.

Being uniform with employees does not mean that an employer cannot make distinctions in treatment with varying pay rates, schedules, stations for servers and so forth. Employees have an enormous capacity to accept and understand such distinctions as long as those distinctions are perceived as justified and reasonable. Employees, however, have very little tolerance for "favored treatment," no matter how slight, when they do not believe the favored treatment is merited. A mere nickle an hour difference in pay rates between two line cooks, if unjustified, can constitute a source of lingering aggravation that can lead to serious discontent.

Within the general area of fair and uniform treatment, there are at least three specific issues which seem to plague many operations:

- *fraternization between managers and their subordinates*

Almost immediately such fraternization is known to, and exaggerated by, the entire work force, invariably breeding perceptions of favoritism even where favoritism does not exist. Therefore, a restaurant owner should prepare, publicize and *strictly enforce* a non-fraternization policy between management and staff. For the same reasons, except in the obvious case of family-owned and operated restaurants, the restaurant owner should also implement an anti-nepotism policy.

- *forgetting the importance of the "back of the house"*

It is safe to say that if a restaurant is vulnerable to a union attack, it is usually most vulnerable in the kitchen. Frequently front-end employees are part-time employees working primarily for tips. Often they have no long-term occupational commitment. These employees constitute a relatively difficult group for unions to organize. The kitchen staff, on the other hand, more frequently tend to be full-time employees who are working for an hourly wage, not tips.

Increasingly, union efforts are devoted to obtaining a foothold in the restaurant by going after a limited unit comprising only kitchen employees. If successful in the kitchen, the union can later use this as a springboard for a subsequent effort to organize the entire house.

Pay close attention to conditions and complaints in the kitchen, making sure that the back of the house gets its fair share of scarce labor dollars.

- *uneven disciplinary procedures*

Employees will understand discipline—even severe discipline—imposed on one of their fellow members so long as the discipline is perceived as fair. To be perceived as fair, it is critical that all of the house rules, as well as the penalties for violating the rules, are known to all employees and that the rules and penalties are uniformly enforced.

2. *Don't make promises you can't or won't keep*

Broken promises can be a serious problem. It is infinitely better to promise nothing than to break a promise made to an employee. This is quite

"There are a number of steps that can be taken to help you recognize the early warning signals of union activity at your restaurant."

"It is safe to say that if a restaurant is vulnerable to a union attack, it is most vulnerable in the kitchen."

"Enlightened management will devise mechanisms to solicit employee opinions, complaints and grievances."

straightforward. Do not promise a kitchen bonus for exceeding certain food costs or labor costs standards unless you are prepared to pay that bonus if those standards are met. Implement pay increases when promised. In any union organizing campaign, the fundamental issue presented to employees will be one of credibility.

3. *Communicate with employees and provide a forum for grievances*

A major theme in any traditional union organizing drive is the union's promise that it will act as spokesman to air employee grievances and will obtain a grievance/arbitration provision in the labor agreement. If employees have no forum to express their complaints and no mechanism to obtain some sort of resolution of their complaints, this union promise will be compelling.

Enlightened management will devise mechanisms to solicit employee opinions, complaints and grievances. There are many ways to do this. Take advantage of employee evaluations, job changes, pay increases and so forth to personally interview employees. Promote informal conversations between all managers and employees. They provide a necessary emotional release for employees.

Don't be afraid that you'll hear too much and be unable to resolve everything. You will not have to solve all the problems nor will you be expected to do so. Isolate those complaints that have real substance and try to resolve them. This will pay off in the long run.

4. *Keep an eye on your organized competition*

When a union initiates an organizing drive at a restaurant, it frequently points to wage rates and benefits in effect at union houses in the same geographical area. As an owner or manager of a restaurant, you must make it your business to keep abreast of wage rates, benefits and other working conditions in other restaurants in your area.

To the extent possible, you should not allow your wages and benefits to become too out of line with those of your organized competition. But if you are unable or unwilling to match your organized competition, it is particularly important that you allocate your labor dollars wisely. For example, consider implementing such low-cost benefits as scheduling flexibility, personal days off, company-supported parties or picnics, free birthday dinners for employees and immediate family and so forth. Such fringe benefits produce very significant employee goodwill.

"Employers often ignore, or take for granted, certain critical advantages they have over any union attempting to organize a work force."

5. *Implement a "no solicitation" rule*

In any organizing campaign unions rely heavily upon paid union organizers plus a cadre of in-house employee supporters to solicit employees' authorization signatures and to otherwise support the union. Obviously, you want to prohibit such conduct at the restaurant to the maximum degree possible. Under law, the only union solicitation by employees that a restaurant employer has to permit is solicitation in *non-customer areas* during *non-working time*. Moreover, a restaurant owner has a right to prohibit all non-employee solicitation in the restaurant.

To be lawful, a no-solicitation rule should be promulgated *prior* to a union organizing drive. If you attempt to promulgate such a rule after a drive begins, it may be found invalid (even if properly worded) because its adoption will be construed to counter union organizing. Your written no-solicitation rule can be worded as follows:

> "Solicitation and/or distribution by non-employees in these premises is prohibited. Solicitation by an employee of another employee is absolutely prohibited in customer areas at any time. Furthermore, in non-customer areas, solicitation by an employee of another employee is prohibited while either the person doing the soliciting or the person being solicited is on working time."

Post this rule in appropriate places in the restaurant, such as employee bulletin boards and the office. To be valid you will have to uniformly enforce this rule. That is, you cannot permit widespread beneficent solicitations and then prohibit union solicitation.

6. *Maintain security of employee lists*

Employers often ignore, or take for granted, certain critical advantages they have over any union attempting to organize a work force. The employer has ready access to the employees at work and has their home addresses and telephone numbers. Do not squander his advantage. The number of organizing drives assisted by employee lists pilfered by union supporters is astounding. Keep such lists secure at all times.

Early warning signs. . .

In most union organizing drives timing is everything. Your objective as an employer, of course, is to learn of any union organizing activities as soon as possible. This is not always easy because unions like to conduct as much of their organizing activities as possible—and make as much progress as possible—before surfacing their interest. They realize that once their efforts are uncovered, they may face an aggressive employer countercampaign. Consequently, they will operate—at the outset—surreptitiously.

There are a number of steps which can be taken to help you recognize the early warning signals of union activity at your restaurant. The number of labor unions interested in foodservice industry representation in any given area will be few. Through your activities in your local restaurant association, chamber of commerce and contacts with other restaurateurs, you should determine what unions are active in restaurants in your area. In addition, in most cases the number of paid union restaurant organizers in any given area are few. Find out who they are and what they look like. Obviously, your management team should be alert to their appearance.

Instruct managers to be alert to signs of union interest. The repeated presence of ex-employees, especially if they are employed at a union house, is one sign.

There are many other early warning signals that a union organizing drive is starting. Examples include

an increase in employee complaints, employees engaging in secretive conversations that terminate when supervisors approach, employees presenting group complaints or complaints via a representative, employee comments regarding unions and threats by disciplined employees.

Pay close attention to any changes in the substance of employee conversations away from social, personal and non-work matters and toward increased concern over working conditions. Be alert to any changes in vocabulary, such as the use of words like "seniority," "grievance," "severance pay," "representation" and so forth. Pay attention to any unusual meetings between employees from different departments. Finally, of course, if you see union graffiti, union authorization cards, handbills or petitions, the problem has progressed beyond the early stages—activity is well underway.

A union campaign is underway. . .

At this point, the employer's objective is quite simple. The employer must take the offensive. Management should do everything legally possible to defeat the union's efforts to obtain signed authorization cards.

The immediate goal of the union is to obtain a "showing of interest" sufficient to obtain an election conducted by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The union must prove that at least 30 percent of the employees in a unit of employees want the union to represent them for collective bargaining purposes. To do this, the union will attempt to have employees sign authorization cards that usually designate the union as the employees' bargaining representative. While the law requires only a 30 percent "showing of interest," as a practical matter a union ordinarily will not proceed unless it obtains signed authorization cards from at least a majority (and usually 60 to 70 percent) of the employees in the unit sought.

The most important steps to counter a full-scale organizing drive include:

1. *Mobilize your management staff*

The employer's first act should be to call a meeting of the entire management team of the restaurant. The message must be made clear, from the start, that the employer's position is strong and unambiguous—that management does not believe it is in the best interests of the company or the employees to have a union in the restaurant and that management opposes this effort to unionize the work force. In short, all on the management team must be told that they will be expected to aggressively implement this decision.

"Under law, the only union solicitation by employees that a restaurant employer has to permit is solicitation in non-customer areas during non-working time."

2. *Gather data*

Simultaneously with the mobilization of the management staff, the restaurant owner should immediately begin gathering important information about the union. This information will include

- *financial data*

You will want to be in a position to tell your employees about the costs of being a member of the union. You will want them to know about the union's dues, initiation fees and assessments. You may also want to tell the employees about how the union spends its money (for example, how much money in salaries and benefits goes to officers and organizers.

Unions are required to submit reports to the United States Department of Labor (DOL) which contain this information and much more. The reports are called "Form LM-1" ("Labor Organization Information Report") and "Form LM-2" ("Labor Organization Annual Report"). You will want to obtain copies of these reports for both the local union and the local's international organization from DOL's Labor-Management Standards Enforcement office in your area. If for any reason the area office does not have copies, you can obtain copies by contacting the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Labor Management Standards Enforcement, Public Disclosure Room, Room 5616 North, 200 Constitution Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20216.

- *constitution and by-laws*

You will no doubt want your employees to understand that joining a labor union carries with it many obligations beyond financial ones. The constitution and by-laws of a union are ideal sources of information regarding those obligations. These documents typically contain provisions dealing with such matters as how labor contracts are formed (i.e., who gets to vote); strike authorizations; picket duty obligations; obligations regarding honoring other unions' picket lines; meeting requirements and provisions regarding "trials," fines, expulsion of union members and other forms of union discipline. You can obtain copies of the union's constitution and by-laws from the same DOL offices.

- *the strike history*

Strikes are a fact of life. As proof that strikes do occur and that the union in question has a history of strike activity, you will want to be able to tell your employees of the number of strikes called by the union.

There are a number of private organizations which, for a fee, will provide you with a complete strike history of any labor union for the previous year, including the name of the restaurant struck, the number of employees on the street due to the strike and the duration of the strike. One such source for this information is the Bureau of National Affairs at 1231 25th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

- *area labor agreements*

The union organizers will be promising extravagant wage rate increases, elaborate fringe benefits and the like if the union achieves representative status.

In order to devise the best technique for dealing with union promises of wage and benefit increases, you need to obtain as much information as possible regarding the actual terms and conditions in labor agreements negotiated by the union in question.

Obtain copies of as many such labor agreements as you can and commence a comparative review of terms and conditions in your restaurant with those in effect in union houses in the area.

- *union corruption*

You will want to inform your employees of any instances of corruption within the union, criminal convic-

tions of union leaders, connections with organized crime figures and the like. There are many sources for such information. Monitor newspapers and magazines for articles. Check with other restaurants in the area that have recently experienced a union organizing drive; they may have accumulated such data. Beyond this, labor relations counsel should also have, or have access to, such materials. Gather the materials and assess them for their potential effect on your work force.

3. Get your position out

Presumably, you have by now mobilized your management staff, you have begun to accumulate valuable information about the union in question and you, hopefully, have a fairly good idea what issue or issues will be of greatest interest, or most persuasive, to your employees. The task now is to speak out *forcefully*. As noted earlier, this is not the time to be timid or reluctant. If you want to remain nonunion, it is essential that management's arguments and opinions get expressed.

Much has been written regarding the do's and don'ts applicable to employer conduct during union election campaigns. As a general proposition, an employer can be quite forceful in the presentation of his views provided he does not threaten employees, promise them benefits, interrogate employees or place employees under surveillance in the exercise of their right to engage in union activities.

When the union representative arrives. . .

If you missed the early warning signals and were unable to mount a sufficiently swift and cogent early counter-campaign, you are going to hear from an official union representative. The union representative should only talk with the owner or general manager.

The union representative will claim that the union represents a majority of the employees and will request that you recognize the union as the exclusive bargaining representative for your employees. The representative may urge you not to put up a fight so that you get a more favorable contract.

Do not weaken. Remember, once the union is in your restaurant it will be extremely difficult to get rid of it. A "cheap" initial contract, even if realized, is no guarantee of future arrangements. The only thing certain is that, once the union gets in, you no longer will be operating the restaurant on your own. From that point forward, you will have a "partner," often antagonistic in nature.

The union representative may offer to prove his claim of majority authorization by showing the authorization cards to the employer and allowing the employer to verify the employees' signatures (card check).

Do not accept or review these cards. You are permitted to lawfully decline to recognize and bargain with a labor organization upon receiving a claim for recognition and need not give any reason for your refusal. If you accept and review these cards and discern that an apparent majority of your employees in the unit sought by the union have signed cards, you may be held to have accepted cards as the method for determining bargaining support and you may be bound by the results of this card check.

For the same reasons, management should *not* engage in any independent polling to determine employee sentiment regarding the union.

Once the employer rejects the union's request for recognition, the union is required (if it has not already done so) to initiate the formal NLRB election procedure by filing a petition with the regional office of the NLRB. In that petition, the union is required to describe the "unit" of employees which the union seeks to represent and the approximate number of employees in that unit. In addition, the union must present a "showing of interest" (through signed authorization cards) to prove that at least 30 percent of the employees in the unit described in the petition want the union to represent them for collective bargaining purposes.

After the union files its petition with the NLRB, the restaurant will receive a copy of the filed petition, a request for certain data and copies of notices, which the NLRB will request be posted in the restaurant. Shortly thereafter, an NLRB agent will contact the employer to determine whether the parties are willing to enter into one or another type of election agreement. The restaurant employer should take no action on any of these matters without legal counsel.

Frequently the parties are unwilling to agree to a consent election and the NLRB will schedule a representation hearing.

Typically, the most important issues dealt with at this hearing involve 1) whether the unit sought by the union is an appropriate one and 2) which employees, if any, are to be excluded from the bargaining unit by virtue of specific exclusionary provisions of the National Labor Relations Act or by decisional law developed under the Act (i.e., supervisors). It is usually in the best interests of the restaurant to attempt to obtain as broad a unit as possible. This forces the union to obtain very broad support in order to win the election.

Several weeks usually elapse between the hearing and the decision of the NLRB regional director. The decision will cover such matters as the scope of the appropriate unit. Shortly thereafter an NLRB agent will contact the parties to establish a date, time and place for the election. The election is usually scheduled to take place on the restaurant premises three to four weeks from the date of the decision. Within seven days after the regional director's decision directing an election, the employer must file three copies of a list containing the names and addresses of all employees in the bargaining unit with the NLRB regional director. The regional director then sends one copy of this list to the union.

Generally it is from this point until the date of the election that the union engages in its most aggressive campaign efforts. The restaurant will want to wage its own counter-campaign. Many decisions will have to be made, such as who will address the employees, what type of communications will be employed (i.e., literature to the homes, bulletin board postings, handouts, large meetings, small group meetings and so forth.) Many decisions will have to be made on a day-to-day basis. No two election campaigns are alike. With the aid of labor counsel, the restaurant should structure its campaign to fit its own work force, issues, management style, personalities and union activity.

Editors note:

This article is based on a book on restaurant labor law written by Mr. Hartland. NRA expects to publish this book within the year.

The opinions expressed in the article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect NRA views.

Are customers getting the service they expect?

This article compares results from a recent Gallup survey on customer satisfaction with specific aspects of service to customer service expectations examined in the 1983 NRA study *Consumer Expectations With Regard to Dining Away From Home.*

From the minute they walk through your door customers expect service. Are they getting what they expect? For most customers the answer is yes, according to results from the September 1983 survey of the *Gallup Monthly Monitor of Eating Away from Home*.* Respondents were given a list of seven different elements of service. They were asked if each element described the service they had received at a certain meal. These seven aspects of service were

- hospitable and friendly service
- being greeted with a smile
- attentive service before, during and after meal
- food served in a timely manner
- service staff that was knowledgeable about the menu
- service staff that was knowledgeable about how menu items were prepared and
- items served as ordered.

Majority received the listed types of service. . .

Restaurateurs should be pleased to know that the majority of consumers indicated they had received the listed types of service when dining out. "Items served as ordered" was named by the greatest percentage of consumers—92 percent. "Hospitable and friendly service" captured the number two spot, with 91 percent of the respondents saying they had experienced this type of service. Almost nine out of 10 respondents said their "food was served in a timely manner." Large majorities also indicated they were "greeted with a smile" (84 percent), the "service staff was knowledgeable about the menu" (83 percent) and "the service staff was attentive before, during and after meal" (75 percent). The least often named, "service staff was knowledgeable about how menu items were prepared," was still listed by a sizable majority of consumers—66 percent.

Comparing consumer studies. . .

It is interesting to compare these results with information from the NRA study, *Consumer Expectations With Regard to Dining Away From Home*, published last fall. This study examines the aspects of service consumers expect when they dine away from home. Although the service elements in the two surveys are not exactly the same, some general comparisons can be made.

For instance, in the consumer expectation study, "food cooked to order" and "food garnished to order" were expected by 85 percent and 72 percent of the respondents, respectively. By comparison "items served as ordered" captured the top position in the Gallup study, with nine out of 10 respondents saying this occurred at their last restaurant meal. The Gallup survey indicates that restaurateurs are gener-

*The *Gallup Monthly Monitor of Eating Away from Home* is conducted monthly and tracks trends in eating out behavior for the U.S. population. Telephone interviews are conducted with approximately 1,000 adults 18 years of age and older. Respondents are asked to report on all meals eaten on the previous day at a restaurant, fast food establishment or any other place where food was purchased, such as a work or school lunchroom or cafeteria. Specifically, individuals are asked to report which meal occasion they ate out, the type of restaurant visited and which day of the week the visit occurred. The interviewing for NRA's service question took place between September 9 and September 23, 1983.

ally surpassing their customers' expectations in this area of service.

"Being greeted with a smile" also surpassed expectations. About 80 percent of the patrons said they expected this greeting, and 84 percent of the Gallup survey respondents said they were greeted with a smile at their last restaurant visit.

"Quick food delivery" is another major expectation of most restaurant patrons. Three fourths of the patrons said they expect quick food delivery when dining out. By comparison, almost nine in 10 consumers said they received their "food in a timely manner" in the Gallup survey. This suggests that restaurateurs are doing a good job of satisfying their patrons in this area.

Approximately seven out of 10 patrons said they expect to be asked if they "need anything" or if "everything is alright." Although 75 percent of the respondents in the Gallup poll said they received "attentive service before, during and after the meal," this is a relatively low ranking compared with most of the other services included in the Gallup study. Restaurateurs may want to focus on training their staff to express more interest and concern to customers.

Atmosphere restaurants: tops in positive ratings. . .

Of the three restaurant types—atmosphere, family and fast food—consumers feel they receive the best overall service at adult-oriented (atmosphere) restaurants. Similarly, patrons have the highest expectations regarding the service at these restaurants.

A substantial 98 percent of the respondents indicated they were served their meal as ordered and that the service was hospitable and friendly. Ninety-six percent indicated the staff was attentive before, during and after the meal at adult-oriented establishments. This contrasts with significantly lower proportions at other types of restaurants. Similarly, 91 percent said the staff was knowledgeable about the menu at upscale restaurants versus a lower response for other restaurants.

NRA's comparisons with the expectation study reveal that operators of atmosphere restaurants are doing a good job of meeting their patrons' expectations. When dining at atmosphere restaurants, 97 percent very much expect or expect food to be cooked the way it was ordered, and nearly nine out of 10 want attention from the service staff during the meal. Ninety eight percent agree that the staff should be knowledgeable about the menu and how food is prepared.

Family restaurants received the second highest service ratings among restaurant types. The most positive ratings were given to "items served as ordered" (96 percent) and "hospitable and friendly service" (95 percent). These were followed by attentive service (85 percent).

Family restaurant patrons tend to expect more in the way of service than do fast food patrons but less than upscale patrons, as revealed in NRA's expectation study. Nearly nine out of 10 respondents reported they expect food to be cooked the way it was ordered, to be greeted with a smile and to receive attentive service. A comparison of the two surveys indicates that although family restaurant operators are in general meeting their customers' expectations, they could improve their staff's attentiveness to consumer needs.

Both the Gallup survey and NRA's expectation study show that patron service experience and expectations at fast food places are generally below those for other restaurants. It is understandable that customers would be less likely to receive and expect attention from the service staff during the meal and to ask questions about the menu because of the nature of the service (counter, self-service) at such places. But fast food customers do want friendly and speedy service. Eighty-eight percent of the Gallup poll respondents indicated their food was served in a timely manner and that they received friendly service at their most recent fast food meal. These figures are in line with patron expectations: 84.1 percent for quick food delivery and 72.0 percent for being greeted with a smile.

Dinner service chalks up best marks. . .

Consumers gave the service they received at dinner higher marks than the other meal periods, and their service expectations are highest for this meal period. One reason for this rating could be that patrons usually allow more time for eating dinner away from home. Another reason could be that restaurateurs emphasize more service during the dinner period because customers are in less of a hurry.

"Hospitable and friendly service" during the dinner meal received the highest ratings. More diners—94 percent—gave positive ratings to this service element. "Items served as ordered" received the second highest rating, with 92 percent of the respondents indicating they received this element of service. "Food served in a timely manner," "being greeted with a smile" and "staff knowledgeable about the menu" were given positive ratings by nine out of 10 patrons.

Generally, the mid-day meal received more positive service votes than the breakfast period. During the lunch period, "items served as ordered" received the top marks, with almost 91 percent of the respondents indicating they received this service component. Almost nine in 10 consumers said they received hospitable and friendly service.

Timely service can often be a prime consideration at lunch since many people have a limited time period allotted for their lunch break. According to the poll, 89 percent of the patrons said their food was served in a timely manner, which speaks well for restaurateurs concerned with capturing more of the lunch traffic. Considerably fewer patrons—60 percent—said they found waiters and waitresses that were knowledgeable about how menu items were prepared during the mid-day meal. This may be due to fewer menu questions being asked of the service staff, but it could indicate that staff needs more training during this meal period.

Overall, breakfast received the lowest positive responses of the three meal periods. The reason for this could be that consumers have the least amount of time for this meal period. Even though 85 percent of the respondents indicated their food was served in a timely manner, this was significantly less than the overall responses for the other meal periods. A comparatively small percentage of respondents—69 percent—said the staff was attentive before, during and after the meal during breakfast—a much lower response rate than received by the other meal periods. Restaurant operators may want to speed up service during the morning meal and train staff to be more attentive to increase their breakfast traffic.

Older consumers are most positive...

According to the Gallup poll, older consumers gave the highest ratings to the service elements. Overall, the 50 to 64-year-old group was most positive, followed by the 65-year-old and over category.

Unlike the other age groups, 50 to 64-year-old consumers gave "food served in a timely manner" the top ranking, with 99 percent of the people from this category indicating they had received this aspect of restaurant service—a significantly higher response rate than given by the other age segments. The next component most often received by this age group was "hospitable and friendly service"—98 percent said they were offered this essential service element. Approximately 95 percent of this segment said they were greeted with a smile and that their food was served as ordered. These responses are substantially more positive than those given by other age groups.

Consumers in the 65-year-old and over segment were most positive about receiving their food as ordered. More than 94 percent said they were served their meal the way they ordered it. Although "staff knowledgeable about how the menu items were prepared" received the least number of positive responses in all the age categories, 65-year-old and over consumers gave this service a comparatively high rating. More than three-fourths of this age group said they had received this aspect of service—the largest percentage among all age categories.

On average, the 35 to 49-year-old group was the next most positive segment. This category gave highest marks to "hospitable and friendly service," with 94 percent indicating they were provided with this service ingredient. "Items served as ordered" received almost 93 percent positive responses, and "food served in a timely manner" was reported by nine out of 10 respondents.

In general, younger consumers between 18 and 34 years old were least enthusiastic about the service they received at restaurants. While a large majority of these patrons indicated they were provided with the listed service elements, their responses were substantially less positive than the other age groups. For instance, 88 percent of the 25 to 34 year olds said they received their meal as ordered—significantly lower than 95 percent posted by the 50 to 64-year-old segment and the almost 92 percent for the 18 to 24-year-old group.

The 25 to 34-year-old group gave particularly low ratings to attentive service "before, during and after the meal." Only 66 percent said they received this type of attention, versus a more substantial 90 percent for 50 to 64-year-olds.

This data suggests that younger consumers feel they are not receiving optimum service when dining out. This may be due in part to the differences in the types of restaurants visited as well as to different perceptions of exactly what restaurant service is. Restaurateurs at all types of restaurants should train their staffs to provide every customer with overall good service, no matter what his or her age. This ensures customer satisfaction.

Consumer ratings of service elements received during meal periods

Service received	Total	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Items served as ordered	91.7%	90.5%	90.9%	92.5%
Hospitable and friendly service	91.0	87.8	89.4	93.9
Food served in a timely manner	89.4	85.1	89.0	91.1
Being greeted with a smile	83.9	77.0	80.2	90.1
Service staff was knowledgeable about the menu	83.4	79.7	79.8	89.2
Attentive service before, during and after meal	75.4	68.9	70.3	84.0
Service staff was knowledgeable about how menu items were prepared	66.4	66.2	60.5	72.3

Source: *Gallup Monthly Monitor of Eating Away from Home*, NRA proprietary question, September 1983.

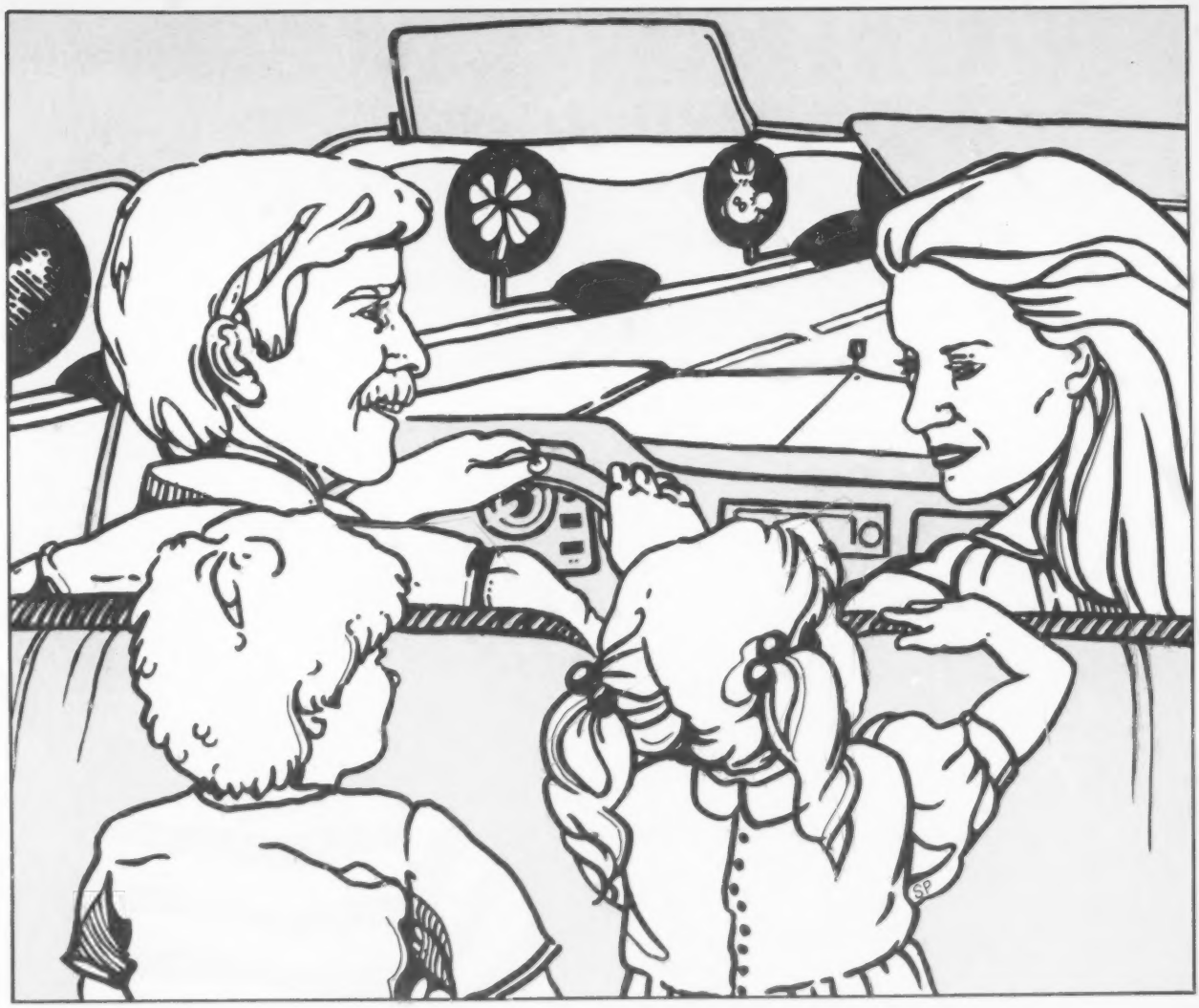
Consumer expectations with regard to restaurant service*

Expectation	All restaurants	Fast food restaurants	Family restaurants	Atmosphere restaurants
Food cooked the way you asked for it	84.6%	71.4%	88.6%	97.1%
Food garnished the way you asked for it	71.6	61.4	70.2	85.8
Being greeted with a smile	80.5	72.0	81.9	90.0
Food delivered quickly	74.3	84.1	74.1	62.0
Asked if anything else was wanted	71.4	54.9	77.3	86.3
Asked if meal was all right	65.7	43.7	72.0	87.0
No wait to be seated or served	63.4	66.4	61.8	61.1
Told when order will be ready	58.1	59.0	54.5	60.6

*Based on percent of respondents who expect or very much expect the attribute
Source: Based on results of a National Restaurant Association telephone survey of 1,000 adults in August, 1982.

Good service—a broad challenge...

Providing good service is a broad challenge for restaurateurs because it involves coordinating many different elements. An effective training program—particularly to increase menu knowledge and food preparation savvy—will help the wait staff give customers the personalized attention they want and expect.



A look at the market potential of holidays

Americans celebrate holidays with gusto, enjoying special touches that range from fireworks to green beer. To many people, dining out is a natural way to mark a special occasion. Consequently, holidays offer restaurateurs the opportunity to boost sales and traffic on these special days.

Not all holidays have the same market potential, however. To give restaurant operators an idea of the market potential of some of the various holidays, NRA commissioned NPD Research, Inc., to study 15 different holidays. The information is based on eating out data from the CREST Diary Panel for the years September 1976 through August 1983.*

This article summarizes some of the general findings and focuses on the most recent CREST year information gathered between September 1982 and August 1983. Four spring holidays—Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Easter and Secretaries Day—will be highlighted. The remaining holidays will be featured in future issues of the *NRA NEWS*.

Mother's Day—most popular holiday for dining out. . .

Americans seem to love showing how much they appreciate their mothers. In 1983 almost three out of 10 American families reported dining out on Mother's Day—the top percentage recorded among the 15 listed holidays. More than 40 percent of those occasions included children, which indicates Mother's Day is usually celebrated as a family event. St. Patrick's Day (1983) and New Year's Eve (1982) were the next most popular holidays, with almost one in four families reporting they ate away from

*Readers should note that the CREST information included here is based only on data for families; it does not include singles. The proportion of families eating out on the holiday means that one or any combination of family members ate out, and does not necessarily mean that the family ate out as a group. Also, the information is for all meal and snack occasions on the particular holiday. It does not necessarily mean that the family member(s) ate out for the main meal or ate out specifically to celebrate the holiday. In addition, the day of the week on which a specific holiday falls may influence the results.

home on these holidays.

Christmas and Thanksgiving recorded the lowest number of people dining out—3.7 percent and 8.0 percent, respectively. This is a reflection of the large majority of families who stay home to celebrate these traditional family holidays.

Highest average check reported for Christmas Day. . .

Although Christmas is not the busiest day at restaurants, people who do dine out apparently treat themselves to a nice meal. The average check per person on Christmas Day was $5.60 in 1982— substantially higher than the average check size reported for other holidays. New Year's Eve also posted a comparatively high per person check—$4.12.

The smallest average per person checks were reported for Memorial Day—$2.54—and Labor Day—$2.40. This could be because many people traditionally celebrate these holidays with picnics and barbecues and do not generally eat large meals in restaurants.

Most coupons used on Valentine's Day. . .

In 1983 a substantial 23.5 percent of all eating occasions on Valentine's Day involved a consumer perceived deal or coupon—the highest reported percentage among all the holidays. The lowest percentage of deals was recorded on Grandparents Day—8.4 percent. A small proportion of people using deals—9.0 percent—was also reported for Easter.

Most adult-only parties on Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day. . .

More than eight out of 10 families eating out on Valentine's Day were members of adult-only parties. Similarly, approximately 78 percent of the respondents dining out on St. Patrick's Day were not eating with children. This is a reflection of the type of celebrations these holidays involve. Valentine's Day is usually a special day between two people, and St. Patrick's Day is generally celebrated by groups of adults. Not surprisingly, most families eating out on New Year's Eve and Secretaries Day were also dining without children. Interestingly, more than three quarters of the respondents dining out on Thanksgiving were also members of adult-only parties. This suggests that families with children generally eat at home on this traditional family day.

Adults were most likely to include children when eating out on Mother's Day; New Year's Day, Christmas Day and Father's Day. Approximately four out of 10 families reported dining out with children on these holidays.

Popular holidays for eating out

Holiday	Proportion of families dining out	Average per person check
Mother's Day	29.7%	$3.57
St. Patrick's Day	23.8%	$2.66
New Year's Eve	23.6%	$4.12
Father's Day	23.1%	$3.57
Secretaries Day	22.6%	$2.68
Valentine's Day	20.8%	$3.31
Labor Day	20.8%	$2.40
Grandparents Day	20.1%	$3.19
July 4	19.0%	$2.71
Memorial Day	17.5%	$2.54
Christmas Eve	14.7%	$2.88
Easter	14.3%	$3.53
New Year's Day	11.5%	$3.48
Thanksgiving	8.0%	$4.09
Christmas	3.7%	$4.60

Source: NPD Research, Inc., for the National Restaurant Association, September 1982 through August 1983.

St. Valentine's Day—February 14. . .

Designated as a day to celebrate loved ones, Valentine's Day has been a special day for centuries. The first valentines were exchanged in the 16th century—possibly the earliest recorded greeting cards. Today Valentine's Day remains a popular holiday and is celebrated with flowers, cards, candy hearts and, even more importantly, dining out.

Over the years, Valentine's Day has consistently posted a higher-than-average number of families dining out. During the last seven years, approximately one in four families visited a restaurant on Valentine's Day. When Valentine's Day fell on a Saturday in 1981, even more families—over three in 10—dined out on this special holiday. The percentage of consumer perceived deals used on Valentine's Day has gradually increased since 1977, suggesting that more restaurateurs are using promotional deals to attract customers.

Review:
Valentine's Day 1983

- More than one in five Americans dined out on Valentine's Day in 1983—indicating this can be a lucrative day for restaurateurs.
- The average per person check was $3.31, and almost one quarter of all meals involved some kind of consumer perceived deal. The greatest proportion of deals was used during the dinner meal—with more than three in 10 respondents using some type of deal.
- Most patrons eating out on Valentine's Day were between 25 and 49 years old.
- This special holiday was primarily celebrated in the East North Central and South Atlantic regions, and people living in the East South Central region were least likely to eat out on this day.
- A substantial majority of the families dining out on Valentine's Day did so without children—84 percent.
- Traffic was heaviest at fast food and family restaurants, but the majority of dollars were spent at atmosphere/specialty and family establishments.
- Most respondents reported eating lunch or supper away from home on Valentine's Day. More than four out of 10 families visited a restaurant during either of these meal periods.

St. Patrick's Day—March 17. . .

This Irish national holiday celebrating St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, has been adopted by many Americans. One of the best known legends surrounding St. Patrick is that he explained the Holy Trinity to an unbeliever by using the shamrock—a three-leaved plant with a stalk—as an example. Today, Irishmen wear shamrocks on this holiday to emphasize their an-

Valentine's Day (1977-1983)

Year	Average per person check	Percentage of families dining out	Percentage of deals used
1983	$3.31	20.8%	23.5%
1982	$3.03	24.8%	25.6%
1981	$3.31	30.6%	11.5%
1980	$2.79	24.8%	9.2%
1979	$2.32	27.3%	5.7%
1978	$2.06	21.6%	6.4%
1977	$2.04	21.8%	7.2%

Source: NPD Research, Inc., for the National Restaurant Association.

St. Patrick's Day (1977-1983)

Year	Average per person check	Percentage of families dining out	Percentage of deals used
1983	$2.66	23.8%	9.2%
1982	$2.62	22.5%	12.0%
1981	$2.76	11.2%	10.8%
1980	$2.21	18.3%	7.4%
1979	$2.53	27.6%	5.0%
1978	$2.10	33.2%	11.0%
1977	$1.94	26.2%	8.6%

Source: NPD Research, Inc., for the National Restaurant Association.

cestry. Many non-Irish Americans also love to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. Green beer, Irish songs, leprechauns and the "wearing of the green" are some of the ways people set off this day, and restaurants are natural gathering places for these activities.

During the last seven years, more than one in five families visited a restaurant on St. Patrick's Day, emphasizing the continuing popularity of this holiday. A comparatively low percentage of deals has been used on St. Patrick's Day. On average, over the last seven years, less than one in 10 families used some type of deal when dining out on this holiday.

Review:
St. Patrick's Day 1983

- Almost 24 percent of all Americans dined out on St. Patrick's Day in 1983—the second most popular holiday after Mother's Day.
- Approximately one in five of the celebrators lived in the East North Central and South Atlantic regions—a reflection of the high proportion of Irish Americans living in these areas. Consumers in the East South Central area were least likely to dine out on this day.
- The average check was $2.66, and only 9.2 percent of all meals involved deals. This suggests that Americans really enjoy celebrating this day at restaurants and don't necessarily seek coupons or deals to entice them to dine out. Among the meal periods, deals were used most often during dinner—15.3 percent of these occasions involved some type of deal.
- The majority of patrons dining out on St. Patrick's Day were between 35 and 49 years old. Many 50 to 64-year olds also celebrated St. Patrick's Day. Almost 20 percent of the people dining out on this holiday were members of that age group.
- A large majority—almost eight in 10 of the patrons—dined without children.
- Fast food and family restaurants captured the most traffic and dollars. Even so, atmosphere specialty restaurants accounted for almost 20 percent of the dollars spent on St. Patrick's Day.
- Lunch and supper were the most popular meal periods for dining out. Approximately four in 10 of the respondents patronized a restaurant during these meal occasions.

Easter—April 22. . .

Easter's origins go back to the beginning of Christianity. Easter is probably the oldest Christian observance after Sunday. Many colorful traditions have developed over the years to celebrate this special day, such as Easter eggs, bunnies, bonnets and parades. Decorating Easter eggs is not only a festive way to celebrate Easter. Eggs have been considered symbols of renewed life since ancient times. Easter is usually a special day for families to gather, and restaurateurs may want to emphasize this tradition when promoting Easter.

Most people tend to celebrate Easter at home. During the last seven years, the average percentage of families dining out has been comparatively low—14.3 percent. Also few deals have been used on Easter. Over the last seven years less than one in 10 families, on average, has used some type of deal.

Review:
Easter 1983

- A relatively small proportion of consumers—14.3 percent—dined out on Easter in 1983. This reflects the large number of families who celebrate this holiday at home.
- Many patrons ate out with their children—more than a third of the respondents indicated they dined with their children. This again emphasizes that Easter is generally a family-oriented holiday.
- The per person check was $3.53 in 1983—a comparatively high average. Deals were used on only 9.0 percent of the occasions—one of the lowest reported among all the holidays. Deals were used most often during the lunch period—13.2 percent of the respondents reported using a deal during lunch.
- Almost one quarter of all patrons dining out on Easter were 50 to 64-year olds.
- Easter was most often celebrated by consumers living in the Pacific and East North Central regions.
- Fast food and family restaurants accounted for the majority of traffic, but family and atmosphere specialty

Easter (1977-1983)

Year	Average per person check	Percentage of families dining out	Percentage of deals used
1983	$3.53	14.3%	9.0%
1982	$2.97	14.5%	12.1%
1981	$3.74	13.3%	7.3%
1980	$3.50	12.0%	8.8%
1979	$3.71	16.0%	9.5%
1978	$2.56	13.5%	5.6%
1977	$2.08	16.6%	7.1%

Source: NPD Research, Inc., for the National Restaurant Association.

Secretaries Day (1977-1983)

Year	Average per person check	Percentage of families dining out	Percentage of deals used
1983	$2.68	22.6%	10.5%
1982	$2.99	23.6%	8.5%
1981	$2.62	21.3%	6.4%
1980	$2.38	22.9%	6.8%
1979	$2.21	26.1%	5.6%
1978	$1.88	24.6%	8.6%
1977	$1.83	27.6%	5.3%

Source: NPD Research, Inc., for the National Restaurant Association.

establishments captured most of the dollars spent on Easter.

- Over half of the families chose to eat lunch or breakfast out on Easter—a reflection of the popularity of Easter Sunday brunches.

Secretaries Day—April 25. . .

This special day was created to show appreciation for all the hardworking secretaries across the country. The day is usually celebrated with flowers or gifts, and often the boss invites his/her secretary to lunch.

Secretaries Day has continued to be a popular day for dining out. Over the last seven years, almost one in four families reported dining out on this holiday. A fairly low proportion of deals has been used on Secretaries Day, with an average 7.4 percent of all families using some type of deal since 1977.

Review:
Secretaries Day 1983

- Secretaries Day is a popular day for dining out. In 1983, almost 23 percent of the respondents visited a restaurant, which indicates Secretaries Day offers marketing potential for restaurateurs.
- The per person check averaged $2.68, reflecting this occasion is usually celebrated at lunch. One in 10 of the meals involved using a deal or coupon.
- Predictably, few patrons included children while dining out on this day.
- The majority of consumers who ate away from home on Secretaries Day were between 35 and 49 years old.
- Mid-Atlantic and East North Central residents were most likely to dine out on this holiday.
- Family and fast food restaurants captured the majority of traffic on Secretaries Day, but fast food, family and atmosphere specialty restaurants each accounted for similar proportions of the dollars spent.
- Approximately four in 10 respondents dined out for lunch or supper on Secretaries Day. Interestingly, a very low proportion of deals was used during lunch—4.7 percent, compared with 17.2 percent reported for the dinner meal. This suggests patrons do not necessarily look for special deals or coupons when dining out for lunch on this holiday.

Ways to promote spring holidays

Valentine's Day—focus on romance

- Offer dinner-for-two specials
- Enhance romantic atmosphere with strolling musicians or candlelight
- Provide souvenir photos for each couple
- Promote those menu items that can be shared
- Promote entire evening as a memorable way to celebrate

St. Patrick's Day—bring out the green!

- Liven up atmosphere with Irish music
- Offer green beer, Irish coffee and Irish menu items
- Decorate with leprechauns, shamrocks and green balloons
- Promote evening as a festive celebration for all nationalities

Easter—spotlight on families

- Offer discounts for families dining together
- Promote an Easter Sunday brunch, with tempting egg dishes and a holiday display featuring lambs, bunnies and colored eggs
- Include special coupons with decorated Easter eggs or coloring kits
- Have your staff wear Easter bonnets
- Give all children a chocolate bunny

Secretaries Day—make each secretary feel special

- Offer special discounts to bosses dining with secretaries
- Provide complimentary flowers or candy
- Give secretaries coupons so they'll come back on their own

September-October-November 1983

CREST REPORT

CREST Highlights

- Customer counts at the nation's restaurants jumped 4.5 percent in the fall quarter of 1983.
- During the September-October-November period, visit frequency rose slightly—advancing 1.5 percent.
- Sales continued to post strong gains in the fall, rising 8.5 percent, compared with a 9.3 percent gain in the summer and a 7.6 percent increase during the spring.
- The average check size was up only 3.9 percent, down from large advances of 7.9 percent in the summer and 5.3 percent in the spring.
- Restaurateurs used promotions as a means of building customer traffic. In the fall, 11.5 percent of the meal occasions involved a promotion—up from 10.9 percent during the same period in 1982.
- Family restaurants posted the highest gains in customer traffic. Growth at atmosphere specialty restaurants and cafeterias was also significant, but traffic at fast food places increased only modestly.
- Breakfast traffic continued to rise in the fall quarter—up an impressive 13.2 percent. Customer counts at lunch, dinner and snack occasions also posted positive gains.

Customer traffic jumps during fall quarter

Customer traffic jumps 4.5 percent . . .

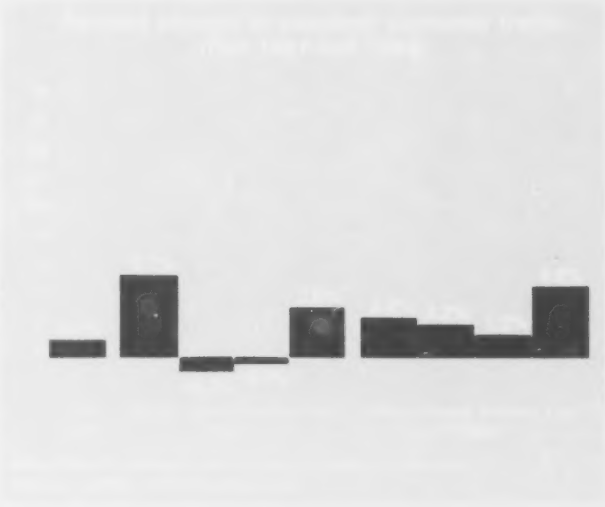
The fall quarter had the strongest gain in traffic in 1983. Customer counts jumped 4.5 percent during the months of September, October and November, marking the fifth consecutive quarter of traffic increases. Previous quarters experienced more modest increases in customer counts—1.3 percent in the summer, 2.2 percent in the spring and 2.4 percent in the winter. Improved consumer confidence and steady economic gains contributed to the stronger upturn during the fall quarter and should continue to boost customer traffic levels this year.

Gallup's "Monthly Monitor of Eating Out," which also tracks consumer behavior in the eating-away-from-home market, also reported favorable fall quarter results. An average of 37 percent of the people surveyed in Gallup's September, October and November surveys reported eating out at least once during the preceding day. This compares with a significantly lower 32 percent reported one year earlier.

A variety of economic factors have contributed to the strong performance in the fall quarter.

Inflation remained low and posted a slight 2.7 percent increase during the months of September, October and November. Wholesale food costs rose only moderately, which is a big plus for the foodservice industry. NRA's food cost index was up 0.6 percent during the first 11 months of 1983—a minimal increase. The unemployment rate, a major determinant of consumer confidence levels, fell for the second consecutive month in November. It dropped to 8.4 percent (seasonally adjusted)—the lowest rate in two years. Personal income also showed steady advances. According to the Commerce Department, personal income rose 1.2 percent in October—the strongest one-month increase since August 1981.

These economic indicators suggest the economy will continue to strengthen, and this bodes well for the restaurant industry. NRA expects positive growth to continue and projects real eating place sales (adjusted for inflation) will advance 4.5 percent in 1984, outperforming the 3.5 percent real sales gain predicted for the total foodservice industry. (For an indepth look at NRA's 1984 forecast, consult the December 1983 issue of *NRA NEWS*.)



Families dining out more often . . .

The average number of times families visited restaurants—visit frequency—rose 1.5 percent during the fall quarter. This compares with a small 0.4 percent decline during the summer, a strong 2.7 percent gain in the spring and a slight 0.8 percent advance in the winter period.

An analysis of visit frequency by restaurant type shows that atmosphere specialty restaurants experienced the largest gain of any category during the fall quarter—up 7.8 percent. Family style restaurants and cafeterias also posted an increase in visit frequency—2.1 percent and 0.8 percent, respectively. Fast food restaurants, however, experienced a slight decrease in the average number of visits per family—1.0 percent. These data support the assumption that the improved financial climate enabled many people to trade up and frequent more expensive establishments.

Restaurant sales up 8.5 percent . . .

CREST sales continue to post strong gains. They advanced 8.5 percent during the fall period. This compares with a 9.3 percent increase in the summer, a 7.6 percent rise in the spring and a 7.0 percent advance during the winter.

Increases in the average expenditure for a restaurant meal or snack—per person check size—were the most moderate of the year. During the fall quarter the average check size increased by 3.9 percent—down from 7.9 percent in the summer, 5.3 percent during the spring and 4.5 percent in the winter. The 3.9 percent increase in average check size is also lower than the 4.9 percent gain in menu prices recorded by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for food away from home during the months of September, October and November.

Promotion usage up slightly . . .

Restaurant operators are continuing to use promotions as a means of building customer traffic, and the level

CREST data can be helpful to restaurateurs

The CREST information presented here can be useful to restaurateurs as a base for comparing their operations with industry performance nationally as well as with performance within their specific restaurant category (fast food, family, atmosphere/specialty restaurants). CREST data can also help monitor performance for specific meal periods and identify how segments will be affected by economic conditions. More detailed CREST information is available to NRA members through the research and information service department of the National Restaurant Association, 311 First Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20001.

of usage rose slightly during the fall quarter. In the September-October-November period, 11.5 percent of the meal occasions involved a promotion—up from 10.9 percent during 1982's fall quarter. Although promotional usage is below last winter's 12.9 percent level, it is above the summer quarter's 9.9 percent level and the spring period's 11.0 percent level.

Looking at the use of promotions by restaurant type shows that fast food restaurants continue to use promotions more often than do other restaurants. However, the level of usage at fast food restaurants dropped from 15.5 percent during the fall period of 1982 to 14.2 percent in the fall of 1983. The remaining restaurant types, on the other hand, increased their usage of promotions. During the 1983 fall period, promotions were used on 11.9 percent of the occasions at family restaurants, 11.2 percent of the occasions at atmosphere/specialty establishments and 7.2 percent of the occasions at cafeterias.

Family restaurants post highest traffic increase . . .

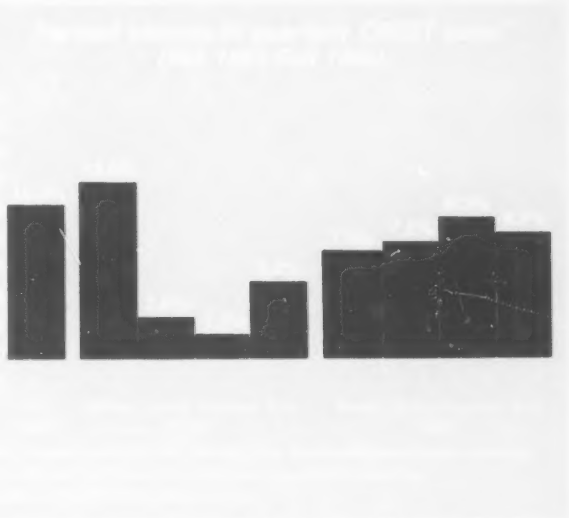
The traffic increases by restaurant type indicate that consumers are trading up and opting to spend a little more on eating away from home. Family restaurants posted the most favorable gains in traffic during the fall quarter. Atmosphere/specialty restaurants and cafeterias also experienced significant advances in customer counts, while traffic at fast food establishments increased only modestly. Traffic levels at coffee shops, however, dropped during the September-October-November period.

Traffic rose a substantial 7.0 percent at family restaurants in the fall quarter over the same period a year ago. An above average increase in the number of families visiting family restaurants helped boost traffic.

The per person check size at family restaurants rose only 1.3 percent during the fall period over the same quarter a year ago. This compares with a larger 3.9 percent average increase for all restaurants. Promotions were used on 11.9 percent of the occasions at this restaurant type—up from 9.4 percent one year earlier. Minimal price increases and increased promotions may have contributed to consumers perceiving a favorable price/value relationship for a meal at family restaurants, thus boosting traffic at these establishments.

Customer counts at atmosphere/specialty restaurants also increased significantly during the fall quarter—6.8 percent, the highest increase in more than a year. A substantial rise in the number of visits by patrons—7.8 percent—may have contributed to the above average growth. Because consumers have gained confidence in both the economy and their personal economic situations, they were more likely to frequent upscale restaurants, adding to the jump in customer traffic at these establishments.

Promotional usage continues to rise at atmosphere/specialty restaurants, which could also be a factor in the strong traffic growth. Promotions were used on 11.2 percent of the meal occasions during the months of September, October and November—up from 9.1 percent of the occasions one year earlier. The per person check size rose 3.3 percent during the fall period—slightly below the 3.9 percent average for all restaurants. This factor may have also contributed to the hefty traffic gains at upscale restaurants.



Customer traffic at fast food restaurants rose a moderate 1.2 percent in the fall quarter—the lowest increase in more than a year. A slight decrease in visit frequency—1.0 percent—may have contributed to the slow growth. Also, as the economy continues to improve, consumers may be trading up to other restaurant types, contributing to the slower than average traffic growth at fast food establishments.

The per person check size rose 4.1 percent at fast food restaurants in the fall—slightly above the 3.9 percent average for all restaurants. Promotional usage dropped at fast food establishments during the fall period. Promotions were used on 14.2 percent of the eating occasions, compared with 15.5 percent one year earlier. These two factors—a higher average check size and a lower usage of promotions—may have contributed to consumers perceiving a less favorable price/value relationship for a meal at a fast food restaurant, thus slowing traffic growth at these establishments.

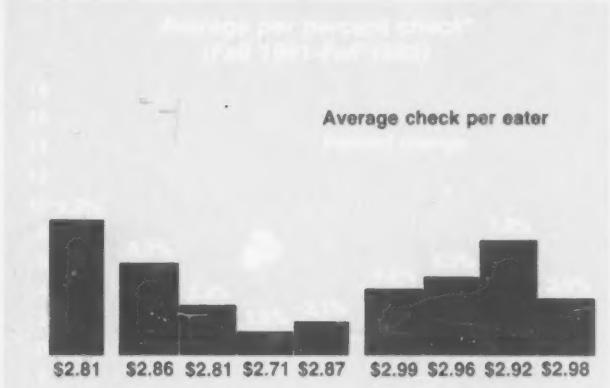
Take-out restaurants and cafeterias both reported increases in customer counts during the fall period. An increase in promotional usage and a decline in average check size probably contributed to the rise in customer traffic at cafeterias. Take-out establishments reported a hefty jump in visit frequency, and this helped boost traffic.

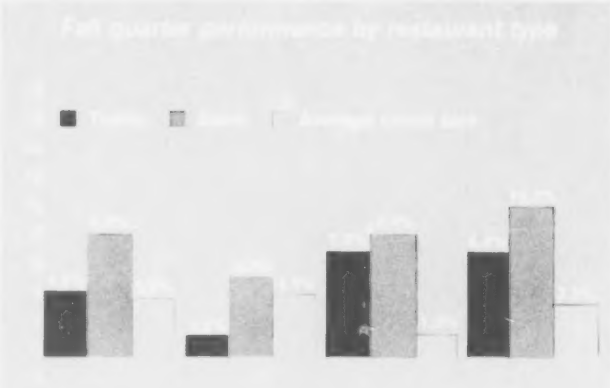
Coffee shops, on the other hand, experienced a decline in customer traffic during the fall quarter.

Breakfast traffic continues to rise . . .

Traffic rose at all meal occasions during the fall quarter, but breakfast easily captured the number one spot. Customer traffic for the first meal of the day was up an impressive 13.2 percent during the fall quarter, although somewhat lower than the 14.7 percent advance reported for the summer period. A substantial 8.4 percent increase in visit frequency contributed to the healthy rise in customer traffic during the months of September, October and November.

Promotions accounted for 9.3 percent of the eating occasions, up from 8.8 percent one year earlier. The average check size advanced only 2.5 percent during the fall—less than the 3.9 percent average for all restaurants. Together, these factors probably helped customers feel they were receiving a good value for the breakfast meal. The continuing increases in breakfast traffic





indicate more and more patrons are choosing to eat this meal away from home. Operators who do not offer breakfast may want to consider expanding their hours of service.

Customer traffic during the evening meal advanced 5.0 percent, up from the 4.4 percent rise posted during the summer months. A significant increase in the number of families eating dinner out, along with a modest gain in visit frequency, probably contributed to the traffic gains. The average check size for the dinner meal grew 3.7 percent, slightly below the 3.9 percent average for all restaurants. This, along with a hefty rise in promotional usage, may have added to the improved customer counts. Promotions were used on 16.4 percent of the meal occasions during the fall period, up from 15.4 percent one year earlier.

Restaurant traffic at lunch was up 3.4 percent in the fall quarter—the strongest improvement in more than a year. An increase in the number of families eating lunch away from home may have contributed to the upturn. Also, the improving economy and declining rate of unemployment also may have helped boost customer traffic during the mid-day meal. The average check size for the lunch meal advanced 5.3 percent during the fall quarter, and there was no recorded change in visit frequency. Promotional usage was down a slight 0.7 percent for the mid-day meal.

Snacking occasions experienced a 3.2 percent increase in traffic during the fall quarter—the first advance in almost two years. This is a positive sign for the industry since snacks are the most discretionary meal away from home. A 3.6 percent rise in visit frequency, along with a substantial jump in promotional usage, may have contributed to the traffic growth. Promotions were used on 7.5 percent of the eating occasions during the fall quarter—up from 5.2 percent one year earlier. A smaller than average increase in per person check size—3.1 percent—may have also added to the improved traffic counts.

What is CREST?

Launched in September 1975, the CREST (Consumer Reports on Eating Share Trends) survey is designed to track expenditures and behavior in the commercial segment of the foodservice industry. While the study does track chain trends, it contains a great deal more data, including information by type and classification of restaurant and also by meal or snack period.

Some 10,000 families, or approximately 30,000 persons, participate in the study. They have been selected to represent the demographic patterns in the U.S. Each family is asked to record restaurant experiences for a particular two-week period for each of the four quarters during the year. Because the study is repetitive, it creates an excellent opportunity to follow changing trends.

In order to properly complete the CREST diary, several steps are involved. The first step requires that each household member make a daily entry for each meal during the two-week period. Whenever the code for restaurant purchases appears, the participant is asked to elaborate on the occasion by making further entries in the diary.

The second portion of the diary is used only if a household member ate or obtained food prepared away from home in establishments such as restaurants, hotels and motels, fast food/drive-ins, delicatessens, refreshment stands, carryouts, coffee shops, donut shops, ice cream shops or eating places inside variety stores or other retail stores. The diary will not include any meals eaten at schools, hospitals, colleges or other institutional feeding places. When the two-week reporting period is complete, the diary is returned to NPD Research, Inc.

The CREST study is a joint effort of individual foodservice organizations acting in concert to fund a study perhaps beyond the economic reach of any of the individual participants. NRA is solely a participant in this study and not a sponsor. Readers wishing more information on how to participate in the CREST study should contact GDR/CREST Enterprises, one of the NPD Group of marketing and research companies, 9801 West Higgins Road, Rosemont, IL 60081.

The CREST study is designed to provide information on customer behavior, not attitudes. This study will, therefore, provide the user with information on how much people spend, where they spend, what they spend on and so forth. It will not tell people's attitudes toward a particular issue. Because it is an ongoing study, it will allow comparison against a standard—and aid in the development of trend analysis. This enables the operator to make decisions based on documented trends rather than on casual observation.

HALF BAKED

A Sugar Bowl classic

Usually a cake is the standard gift to commemorate a birthday. But the people of Michigan found something far more original—and appropriate—for the 50th anniversary of the Super Bowl: a 40-inch replica of the actual sugar bowl trophy made from Michigan beet sugar.

The trophy, which was the joint creation of Sheraton Oaks Hotel Executive Chef Remy Berdy and Pastry Chef Michael Baugh, was presented by Michigan Governor James A. Blankard to the people of Louisiana at the annual New Orleans Superdome classic on January 2.

Along with the replica, the Michigan Department of Commerce arranged for 100,000 "Yes Michigan" sugar packets for use in more than 20 major hotels and restaurants during the Sugar Bowl weekend and also the distribution of 4,000 red delicious Michigan apples in the Sugar Bowl headquarters hotel.

The apples and sugar packets are long gone, but the sugar trophy replica has been placed on permanent display in the New Orleans Superdome.

—Ross Roy, Inc.

Fruit: A natural diet food?

Fruit may be a natural diet food. According to a recent Yale University, fructose—a simple sugar found in fruit that slowly builds insulin levels—suppresses hunger up to three hours after the fruit is eaten. Theoretically, fruit dieters can cut their calorie intake by up to 50 percent, thus losing weight.

The popular grapefruit diet, apple diet and other fruit diets may have scientific merit after all, says Yale Study Director Judith Rodin, who claims that it's possible to lose 50 pounds in a year if these fruit nutrients have a long-term effect.

—USA Today

Breakfast delivered to the front door

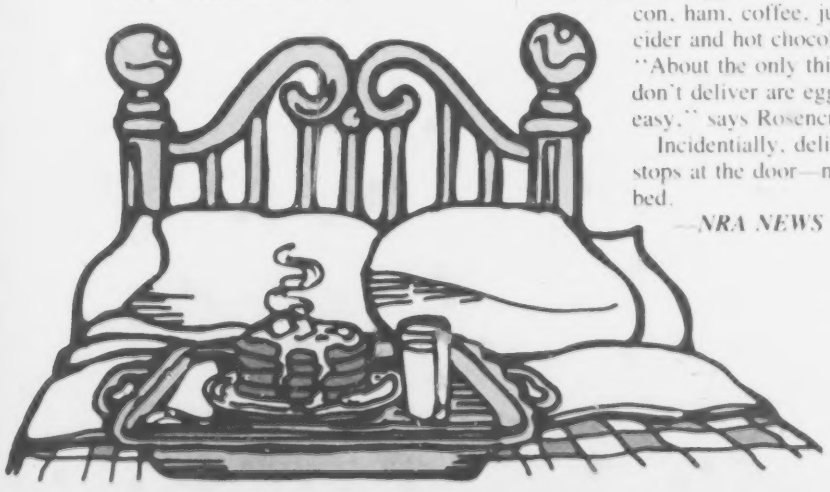
Breakfast in bed is what Matt Rosencrans, owner/operator of the Colonial Pancake House, Grand Forks, ND, offers his customers. The idea, modeled after pizza delivery services, came from one of Rosencrans' regular customers, who mentioned it would be nice to have the Colonial Pancake House breakfast in bed.

When *NRA NEWS* spoke to Rosencrans several weeks ago, the program was only one week old and deliveries were scheduled between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. Even then Rosencrans reported 30 to 40 home deliveries a day. The enthusiastic response to the delivery program has led him to consider eventually extending the service to 24 hours a day. Already two extra people have been hired to help with home deliveries, which include pancakes, waffles, scrambled eggs, French toast, bacon, ham, coffee, juice, hot cider and hot chocolate.

"About the only thing we don't deliver are eggs over easy," says Rosencrans.

Incidentially, delivery stops at the door—not the bed.

—NRA NEWS interview



Good vibrations for fish thawing

A possible breakthrough for fish thawers is being tested by the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center, Seattle, WA. Acoustical thawing—using sound waves to vibrate ice crystals—is believed to reduce fish thawing time by a factor of five (what once took five hours to thaw can now be thawed in one hour).

Each species of fish has different size crystals. Once these crystals are calculated a "thermoelastic relaxation frequency" can be determined to help the crystals pass heat more readily. Tests on 28-pound cod blocks immersed in fresh water and exposed to 1,500 hertz wave energy suffered no loss of quality when compared to fish thawed only in fresh water.

Seafood Leader

NRA SEMINAR SCHEDULE

American Regional Cookery
3/6-7 Las Vegas, NV
3/12-13 Boston, MA

Banquets and Buffets
4/11-12 Tampa, FL
4/17-18 Milwaukee, WI

Simplified Baking Workshop
3/13 Chicago, IL
3/27 Washington, DC
4/4 Exeter, NH
5/8 New York, NY

Off-Premise Catering
3/5-6 Pittsburgh, PA
3/26-27 San Diego, CA
4/9-10 Atlantic City, NJ
4/30-5/1 Las Vegas, NV

Computers in Foodservice: A Primer
3/26 Baltimore, MD

Computers in Foodservice: Advanced Technologies/ Now That I Have One...*
3/27 Baltimore, MD

Perfecting Your Culinary Skills
3/6 Denver, CO
3/8 Las Vegas, NV
3/13 Columbus, OH
3/15 Indianapolis, IN
4/10 Richmond, VA
4/19 Atlanta, GA

Dining Room Management
3/7 Omaha, NE
3/26 Allentown, PA
3/28 Cleveland, OH
4/10 Atlantic City, NJ
4/16 Oklahoma City, OK
4/18 Memphis, TN

Controlling Food Cost
3/5 Burlington, VT
4/16 Kansas City, MO

Kitchen Management
3/19 Little Rock, AR
3/26 Knoxville, TN
3/28 Columbia, SC
4/10 Atlantic City, NJ
4/18 Cincinnati, OH
4/30 Boston, MA
5/2 Binghamton, NY

Principles of Labor Cost Management*
4/11 Philadelphia, PA
4/24 Baltimore, MD
5/7 Seattle, WA
5/9 San Francisco, CA

Advanced Labor Cost Management*
4/12 Philadelphia, PA
4/25 Baltimore, MD
5/8 Seattle, WA
5/10 San Francisco, CA

Location! Location! Location! How to Successfully Negotiate and Finance Your New Operation
3/14-15 Atlanta, GA
4/4-5 New York, NY

Planning and Implementing Restaurant Marketing Strategy
4/2-3 Hartford, CT
4/25-26 Denver, CO
4/30-5/1 Washington, DC

Creative Merchandising Techniques
3/26 St. Louis, MO
4/9 Atlantic City, NJ
5/9 Wilmington, DE

Motivation: Increasing the Desire to Do More and Better Work
4/24 San Francisco, CA
5/2 Minneapolis, MN

Opening a Restaurant: Before You Start Cooking...
3/6 Dallas, TX
4/3 Raleigh, NC
4/7 Seattle, WA
4/9 Portland, ME

Operational Analysis
3/6-7 San Francisco, CA
3/27-28 Columbus, OH
5/7-8 Philadelphia, PA

The Pantry: Prep for Profit
4/26 Detroit, MI
5/1 Las Vegas, NV
5/3 San Francisco, CA

Basic Purchasing
4/2 Los Angeles, CA
4/9 Atlantic City, NJ
4/20 Little Rock, AR
5/7 Des Moines, IA

Basic Supervision in Foodservice
3/6 Baltimore, MD
4/3 Chicago, IL
4/17 New Orleans, LA
5/8 Milwaukee, WI

Train the Trainer
3/12 Salt Lake City, UT
3/13 Okalahoma City, OK
4/26 Los Angeles, CA

Wine: Sales and Merchandising
3/8 Philadelphia, PA
4/17 Atlanta, GA
4/19 New Orleans, LA
5/15 Williamsburg, VA

**Please note that there are basic and advanced courses on the topics of computers and labor costs. These courses are scheduled consecutively, but either program may be taken independently of the other.*

Hospitality Project Workshops

Washington, DC

3/5-6 Fast Food
3/7-8 Full Service
3/12-13 Cafeteria

For more information, contact:
NRA Education Programs
311 First Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001
800-424-5156

STUDY GROUP MEETINGS

Internal Audit
3/14-16 San Antonio, TX

Financial Officers
4/4-6 San Francisco, CA

Tax Executives
4/4-6 San Francisco, CA

Marketing Executives
4/8-11 Washington, D.C.

EDP
4/24-27 Clearwater Beach, FL

Safety Officers
4/25-27 Atlanta, GA

Quality Assurance
5/8-9 Arlington, VA

Purchasing
5/16-18 Chicago, IL

MAFCO
5/16-18 Chicago, IL

For more information on specific study groups, contact Philip Kralovec, (312) 853-2525

IN-HOUSE SEMINARS MAY BE ARRANGED UPON REQUEST

Feel like there is something a little strange happening in your foodservice operation?

Let NRA Publications put the industry into perspective

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Enclose a check for the price of the book(s) *plus* postage and handling as well as applicable taxes. We can only bill orders over $50 and they *must be accompanied by a purchase order.*

Minimum U.S. shipping/handling charge is $2.00; for orders over $20, add 10%; minimum intl. shipping/handling is $4.00; orders over $20.00 add 20%.

Washington, DC, residents add 6% sales tax; Illinois residents add 7% sales tax; Chicago residents add an *additional* 1% sales tax.

Great Menus

NRA's 21st Annual Great Menu Contest Award Winners

If you're planning to redesign your menu or are just curious about what the best menus in the country look like, this is your book. Photographs of the winning menus, accompanied by inside specials and production notes, are included for each winning menu. A special chapter, "State of the Art," singles out non-winners for special or unique innovations and features.

PB880; Nov. 1983; 64 pgs.; **$19.95;** *plus shipping and handling and of new publications.*

The Success of Our Restaurant Depends on You

NRA Payroll Stuffer Program

This is a simple, effective program complete with camera-ready payroll stuffers. It will help you recognize and reward your employees. The payroll stuffer program tells your employees, "We're glad you're here!" The project kit includes all the material and information you'll need to produce a customized program which will boost morale and let your employees—from busers to chefs—know that you care.

PB549; 1982; **$3.50;** *plus shipping and handling.*

PROMOTIONS— What's Possible, What's Popular and What's Profitable

Edited transcript of NRA's Second Annual National Conference on Promotions. Use this transcript as a how-to manual on building a successful promotions program. From the steps involved in developing a promotional strategy to the pros and cons on couponing, you'll learn what the experts are doing in restaurant promotions.

MG575; Nov. 1983; 80 pgs., **$12.50;** *plus shipping and handling.*

Consumer Expectations with Regard to Dining at Fast Food Restaurants

If you operate a fast food establishment, you shouldn't be caught without this comprehensive research report on your customers' expectations. Find out what your customers are really looking for when they walk in your doors. The data in this new NRA publication/research report includes demographic charts and tables to help you pinpoint *your* customers' wants and needs.

CS926; Oct., 1983; soft cover; 130 pgs.; NRA members **$15,** non-members **$30;** *plus shipping and handling.*

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